cinema papers

Product Placement. There's more to it than meets the eye. **Stephan Elliot.** A roller coaster career. **Tackle Happy.** A diary of naked shenanigans on tour. **Grunge Movies.** Getting down, getting dirty. **Barry Divola, Olivia Rousset, Maya Stange, Adrian Martin, Madeleine Swain, Paul Harris.**

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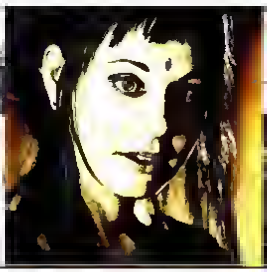


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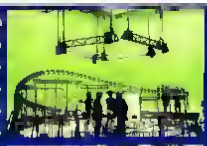

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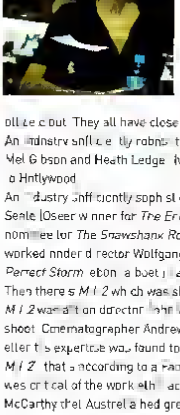


→The festivals issue as *Seinfeld* fans will recognise is festive music the Christmas you celebrate when you don't believe in Christ but want to get in on the fun regardless.

For this issue we've appropriated the tag to encompass the general joy and commending the arrival of both the wide blockbusters and arthouse film festival season. Point being, get into it, even if it's your last time.

Non-believer Barry Divola has done a full investigation of the Sydney Melbourne end Brisbane film festivals. He has gone beyond the palaver to find the festivals' hottest tickets.

Nobody requires guidance through the blockbusters. From the box office behemoth that was *Gladiator* to John Woo's take on the Mission Impossible franchise, we now have the release of *The Patriot* and *The Perfect Storm*, among others.

As the exhibition sector switches into high gear, its worth noting these titles have more in common than almighty box office clout. They all have close links with the Australian production industry.

An industry sufficiently robust to nurture the on-screen talents of Russell Crowe (*Gladiator*) and Mel Gibson and Heath Ledger (who portray father and son in *The Patriot*) before their transition to Hollywood.

An industry sufficiently sophisticated to produce the immensely talented cinematographer John Seale (Oscar winner for *The English Patient*) and editor Richard Francis-Bruce (three-time Oscar nominee for *The Shawshank Redemption*, *Seven* and *Air Force One*). Seale and Francis-Bruce worked under director Wolfgang Petersen on *The Perfect Storm*. Due for release in July, *The Perfect Storm* is about a boat in a big storm, stars George Clooney and Mark Wahlberg.

Then there's *M:I 2* which was shot in and around Sydney during 1999.

M:I 2 was Australian director John Woo's first experience of working in Australia and it was a troubled shoot. Cinematographer Andrew Lesnie was eventually replaced by American Jeffrey Kimball after his expertise was found to be with a different film technology than the one Woo was using on *M:I 2*, that is according to a Fairfax newspaper report. In which the normally very gracious director was critical of the work ethic and expertise of Australian crews. Woo told journalist Phillip McCarthy that Australia had great potential to become a second Hollywood, but essentially we had a long way to go.

By virtue of using the Fox Studios, *M:I 2* was eligible for the payroll tax rebates which formed part of the original deal signed by the New South Wales Government when the studios were first proposed. A handy advantage, especially when domestic production does not appear to be enjoying the spoils which are supposed to follow from increased international production.

Director Stephen Elliott send as much during an interview for this issue of *Cinema Papers*. And with persons entirely out international sales and local box office languishing under 5 percent, we've got a long way to go, baby.

Michaela Boland

Michaela Boland

newsfront

Complete Post on the move

After 20 years in the post production business Melbourne's Complete Post has opened a facility in the Sydney suburb of Darlinghurst.

With Fleming Digital Studio and Avid suites available, the push into Sydney was driven by market forces and what the company calls "logical progression and growth".

Meanwhile, computer graphic artist Daryl Munton has returned from LA to oversee the company's new in-house 3D computer graphics imaging department in Melbourne. After several years spent working at Rhythm and Hues, Industrial Light and Magic and Sony Imageworks, Munton says, "Working on films of the scale of *Contact* and *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace* has been a great experience. I look forward to the day when Complete Post can deliver such a project like that. It may take a while but that's the master plan."

Local films secure distributors

Buena Vista International (BVI) has made its first foray into domestic distribution with the recent purchase of director Vince Gerrusso's *Mallboy*. Produced by Fone Engger (*Romper Stomper*), *Mallboy* screened in Directors' Fortnight at Cannes. It was financed as a SBS/Showtime million dollar movie. BVI, which has secured domestic theatrical and video distribution, is planning to release theatrically in Victoria and New South Wales ahead of the other states. Roadshow distributor of *The Castle* has taken up what is believed to have been its first took option on Working Dogs' *The Dish*. Arthouse distributor Sharmill Films will distribute Paul Cox's *Serafine* and Jim Nyasky, which is currently in production. Following the profitable post completion purchase of *The Wog Boy*, Twentieth Century Fox has secured Australian distribution rights to Shirley Barrett's comedy *Walk the Talk*.

BVI general manager Alan Finney said the current trend towards filmmakers financing projects independently, then seeking distribution from completion was a better option for distributors. The risk is transferred to filmmakers who can then request a higher price which distributors are willing to pay if they see value in the film.

Ushering in the digital era

Star Wars: Episode 2 will be shot using predominantly filmless cameras when it commences production at Sydney's Fox Studios in June. According to a report in *Screen International*, outlining six 24 frame high definition Sony camcorders will save director George Lucas time by eliminating the need to transfer large amounts of film footage into a digital format for post production.

Meanwhile, Kodak's hoping to capitalise on extensive exposure through product placements of the digital cameras in Mission Impossible 2 (*MI 2*). The marketing exercise with an advertising campaign featuring *MI 2* star Tom Cruise is designed to usher Kodak digital cams into the mainstream consumer market.

MUFF takes on MIFF

Melbourne's Lumiere Cinema has launched a parallel event to the Melbourne International Film Festival called MUFF – the Melbourne Underground Film Festival. Designed to showcase underground film, including several rejected by MIFF, MUFF will run from July 20-26. The program will include new titles including Richard Wolstencroft's flat screen porno opus *Pearls Before Swine* and a retrospective of Australian films including the cult grunge movies *Pulse Shock* (1975) and *Going Down* (1983). Organisers are currently seeking approved event status from the Office of Film and Literature Classification to screen unclassified titles.

Cinema manager Paul Coulter says MUFF will be an tribute to MIFF which has been distinguished by a lack of critical discourse in recent years. With a Freudian slip he says, "They should be stroked. It's happening."

'Say goodnight to Uncle Chop'

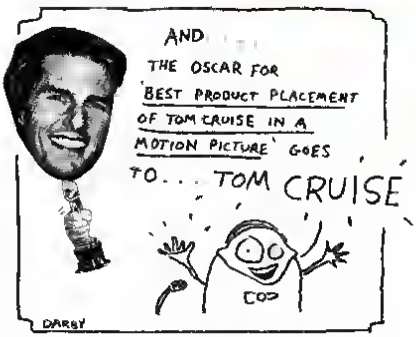
Palace Films is planning to release 120 prints of Andrew Dominik's directorial debut *Chopper* about the life of notorious criminal Mark "Chopper" Reed. The greatest concentration of prints will be released through arthouse cinemas and multiplexes in Victoria and Tasmania (see review p 40).

Rivoli re-opens

Village has re-opened its showcase cinema in the Melbourne suburb of Camberwell. Built in 1940, the Rivoli has been owned by the Village Roadshow group of companies for several decades.

It re-opened as an eight screen multiplex in May without any obvious Village branding.

National marketing manager for Village Cinemas, Anthony Goldman says the decision to emphasise the Rivoli brand, which entailed designing unique carpet fittings and uniforms from other Village Cinemas, was about capitalising on the Rivoli's strong name in the surrounding area.



"I get paid because I'm worth it." Tom Cruise in response to questioning whether US$20 million per film was a fair asking price. He added "and they should pay me that much."

CANNES PRIZE WINNERS

PALME D'OR
DANCER IN THE DARK
BY LARS VON TRIER

GRAND PRIX
GODZILLA DE
BY JIANG WEN

BEST DIRECTOR
BJÖRK
DANCER IN
THE DARK

BEST MALE
PERFORMANCE
TONY LEUNG
CHIU-WAI
IN THE MOOD
FOR LOVE

Best female performance BJÖRK

JURY PRIZE
BY EDWARD YANG

BEST SCREENPLAY
NOUSE BETTY
BY NEIL LABUTE

BEST ACTOR
(CO-WINNERS)
SÅNGER FRÅN ANDRA
VÅNINGEN
BY ROY ANDERSSON
AND TAKHTÉ SIAH
BY SAMIRA
MAKHMALBAF

BEST ACTRESS
(CO-WINNERS)
LUOMEN

BY HASSAN YEKTAPANAH
ZAMANI BARAYE MASTI
ASBHA
BY BAHMAN GHOBADI

GRAND PRIX TECHNICAL
ASPECT
CHRISTOPHER DOYLE,
MARK LI PING BING
AND WILLIAM CHANG
SUK-PING
IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE

CAMERA D'OR
FIVE FEET HIGH AND
RISING
BY PETER SOLLETT

(CO-WINNERS)
KINU'ACH (DESSERT)
D. AMIT SAKOMSKI
KISS IT UP TO GOD
BY CARAN HARTSFIELD

(CO-WINNERS)
CUOC XE DEM
BY BUI THAC CHUYEN
INDIA
BY PERNILLE FISHER
CHRISTENSEN

Local Cannes

Stop a short film made in Queensland was the only Australian film to be selected for official competition at Cannes (see review p 39)
Mallboy (dir Vince Gilarrusso) screened at Cannes in Directors Fortnight

Gold Coast Productions A Melbourne Company

Melbourne is home to a new feature film production company following the launch of Gold Coast Productions in early May The company which claims to have $48 5 million in investment funding has bought five feature scripts for development and has long term plans to build a studio facility in Melbourne

The company's key executives are Ronald Flynn (CEO and executive producer) Joseph R Polichetta (chairman and executive producer) and Keith A Goyal (associate executive producer and production affiliate)

Formerly American based Flynn claims a producers credit for the 1997 television *Heels of Life* and said he financed *I Know What You Screamed Last Summer*

The company was named Gold Coast after the company heads visited Australia and found there is so much gold here Flynn said

The name also resonates in the US where California is the real gold coast Flynn added that Australia was awash with skilled and available crew technicians and actors but local filmmakers were not sufficiently aware of the international marketplace and too reliant on government grants to take full advantage of the situation

Under the headline "Three high fliers who have hooked with all the stars" the company brochure lists names including Tina Turner Stevie Wonder Aaron Spelling and local industry figure Byl Australian managing director Alan Finney and Joel Peartman of Village Roadshow

"These are the people that we feel never some really good pull here in Australia" said Ronald Flynn

"There's a lot of big people working with us it's just a matter of getting it started up"

Finney who did not attend the launch turned down a position on the Gold Coast Productions board and has no formal association with the company Peartman also has no formal association with Gold Coast Productions but does not dismiss outright the possibility of working with them

Flynn said he was "very confident in a distribution deal with Joel"

According to Flynn the company is not looking for investors because financing is already in place and two features will be in production by August

"The financials are the easiest part of what we do The hardest part is finding the right players"

The Director a $5 million feature length remake of Patrick Hughes short film of the same name is due to commence production mid June with casting to commence early June Hughes is currently working on the second draft of the script on which Flynn will seek Peartman's advice

"We've just finished the first draft At the end I absolutely wanted more" "I'd like to see more happen within that 90 minutes" Flynn said

Let the Games Begin

It might be school holidays in New South Wales but the Olympic period (September 15 through October 1) is shaping up to be an anxious time for exhibitors and distributors

Research from Atlanta in 1996 shows entertainment pursuits including video rental and cinema box office dropped off drastically during the first Olympic week and picked up marginally during the second as people became bored watching TV

August is traditionally a popular month to release Australian films after they have premiered in the Sydney Melbourne or Brisbane festivals but leading into the Olympics could truncate a film's season

At presstime Roadshow was planning to release *Mr Accident* (Yahoo Serious) and UIP is scheduled to release *The Adventures of Rocky and Bullwinkle* (Rene Russo) and *The Road to El Dorado* (Chevy Chase) on September 14 With *El Dorado* releasing in New South Wales a week earlier than the other states on September 7

freshair

mail→Clarification

I hesitate to know in awarding yet another incarnation of *Cinema Papers*, it looks great, in my opinion, and I like the verve and panache. But let's get the history of the magazine off to an accurate start. David Parker is a great filmmaker, but I don't know why he is recalling the 'early days' of *Cinema Papers*. He wasn't there!

On page six (issue 132) you reproduce an article by myself with a caption including "(from) issue one October 24, 1969". This, in fact was not issue one but the second incarnation of the magazine. The real issue one was launched at the then East End bookshop in Exhibition Street under the auspices of the LaTrobe University Film Society in October 1967. The issue was named and edited by myself and helped by Peter Shelley, Freya Matthews and Rod Bishop. Its cover showed a negative frame from Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin. I then went to London and Peter and Scott Murray later published the version mentioned above. The rest, as they say, is history, with many controversies on the way. Please be magnanimous and kind enough to reinstate the founding credits of Scott, Peter and myself. After all, without us you wouldn't have the tradition to carry on. Good luck on the good ship *Cinema Papers*.

Philippe Mora

Danny Joker and Andrew Lancaster, the editors of Cinema Papers, as a reader and member of the student film community, thank the editors of Cinema Papers for inclusion in issue 132 of the article by Philippe Mora.

Mr Mora is correct in his recollection of the founding of the Cinema Papers as the LaTrobe University Film Society.

mail→Query

I wish to purchase a copy of The Oxford Companion to Australian Film that was reviewed in issue 132. Can I order a copy through your company? As an avid reader of *Cinema Papers* I must say that I find your re-vamped issue very appealing. Keep up the good work.

Natalie Wilson

Oxford Univ Press direct on 03 9824 7132.

email→Emails from Cannes

Tait Brady

Chopper (Palace Films) has been a big buzz film in the market, every screening full, with major US and European buyers. All the Americans are circling the film but no one has made the leap and made a bid. The best thing has been the responses from people seeing the film, all recognising how well directed it is, and how great Eric (Bana) is.

The Paul Cox film *Innocence* (Sharmill Films) has been the same, lots of buyer action and word of mouth. It will be a festival fave for the next 18 months. Both these films should have been in Official Selection. You wouldn't believe some of the rubbish I've seen in Directors Fortnight and Un Certain Regard!

The film of the festival is *Dancer in the Dark* (Palace Films) the expectation level was so high there was a crush at every screening. A thousand people queuing at 7.45am for an 8.30am screening. Amazingly, the film manages to meet expectations and is pretty impressive. Insane, huge and Bjork is incredible. It should win the top prize, but I wonder if the jury is intimidated? Glad we bought it last year.

We were happy with our other top films here; the Merchant Ivory / Henry James' *The Golden Bowl* and the David Mamet film *State and Main*. Very little else for distributors to buy. Lots of good French films that will never play in Australia cos they are so dark and sombre, sad, unpleasant whatever.

Tait Brady is general manager Palace Films

Kim Galton

Cannes was quieter this year and there were no run-away films in the official festival or in the market. Australia had three films in the official sections of the festival. *Mallboy* in Director's Fortnight was well received with a packed theatre and virtually no walkouts. The special Critics' Week screening of *Soft Fruit* went well as did the short in Official Selection, *Step*.

In the market, the Melbourne film *Chopper* was the standout success. Its controversial and edgy portrayal of Melbourne underworld character Chopper Read attracted attention from many distributors. International sales agent Beyond Films had to schedule additional screenings and even so was turning people away. However, Paul Cox's film *Innocence*, a moving and lyrical story about love and old age, in a quieter way also attracted a lot of attention and along with a number of sales and festival invitations.

Representatives from the AFC and the FFC, along with the FTO and Cinemedia, presented a coordinated Australian presence. Events were held for international buyers and festival directors for both *Mallboy* and *Soft Fruit*, and Beyond Films held a cocktail party at the AFC headquarters following the premiere screening of *Chopper*. A lunch for a number of leading producers and Australian sales agents and distributors was hosted by Australia's Ambassador to France, John Spender. The AFC hosted a breakfast for representatives of Miramax to meet with newer Australian filmmakers attending the Festival, and a cocktail party was also held to provide an opportunity for some of the smaller international sales agents to meet Australian filmmakers.

Kim Galton is chief executive of the Australian Film Commission.

Natalie Miller

Good year for Aussie films with buzz and sales on *Chopper*, *Better than Sex*, *Innocence*, *Mallboy*, *Russian Doll* and *Angst*. The AFC 'Majestic' bash was hosted by Ambassador John Spender and AFC Chief Executive Kim Dalton. Gillian Armstrong was spotted among the throng. She had flown in before pre-production on her new feature based on a Charlotte Gray novel.

Internet companies selling any variation you could think of for dainy business on the net were presenting a high profile. Internet studios, reel play, film bazaar, aus. Even the foyer entrance of one of Cannes' busiest and grandest hotels 'The Majestic' had a big rug woven with repeated name of Reelplay.com for the big names in the industry to walk over daily.

Who will make money in anyone's guess and what it all means for the future of film will be fascinating to watch.

There's so much hype, emotion and continued clapping at the end of screenings, the French love the movies. And as the 'frocked-up' crowds swan up the carpeted stairs for the evening festival screening one still wonders that there is nothing quite like it anywhere.

Five trade film mags are printed daily - the volume of information is amazing. A Herculean David Stratton reviews for *Variety*, his task to see a film and get the review written and in print immediately.

The movies? There is no doubt Asian cinema has made a big impression. French movies were in abundance.

Natalie Miller runs the Longford Cinema and Sharmill Films, is co-owner of Cinema Nova and a Cinema Papers board member.

Blockbusters

After a crop of long and bleak films, **Joe Queenan** is ready for entertainment.

→When the average person thinks about the future, it would be to walk a film critic. He invariably forgets that film critics have to go see movies like *Magnolia*. One frigid day in January, I finally broke down and bought a ticket to see the latest over-praised film by the director of *Boogie Nights*. Since the Academy Awards were last approaching, since Paul Thomas Anderson's film was likely to be nominated for a few honours, and since the friend I was with had no interest in *Galaxy Quest*, I agreed. I blew off an afternoon and took in a film I otherwise had no interest in ever seeing.

When the ticket taker ripped the screening room handed back my torn stub, I said that I had an important meeting. I gave long and I didn't want to miss my train and needed to know what time the film ended. He said that it ended at 6:30pm. It was then 2:50pm and 10 minutes before show time. I asked the young man if he was joking, and he said he was not. So I dropped the ticket stub on the floor, left the theatre and went home. Right then and there I decided that I didn't want to be a film critic any more.

I am not going to blame Paul Thomas Anderson or his interminable movie for the decision I reached that day. Other directors (Oliver Stone, Mike Leigh, whoever made *The Green Mile*) and other interminable films (*The Hurricane*, *The Cider House Rules*, *Topsy-Turvy*, *On Any Given Sunday*) also contributed to my decision. This was something that had been building up for years and years, as films got longer and longer with less and less reason for being so. At last I could take no more. So I stopped going to the movies.

To be honest, I must admit that I stop going to the movies all the time. Born into a family which given to apocalyptic, but ultimately half-hearted pronouncements ("I'll never vote for that weasel Nixon again!" "That's the last time I root for those Rams!") I frequently issue public announcements to the effect that I will never shop at a particular store again, that I have accosted a phone caller from such and such a person for the very last time, that my work will never appear on the pages of this or that underhanded, cheap, immoral, late-paying, badly designed, back-stabbing, worm-ridden publication. Sometimes I keep these promises. Sometimes I don't.

In the case of motion pictures, I decided three years ago that I would not set foot in the cinema again until Hollywood stopped making Meg Ryan movies. But then *Donnie Brasco* came out of Hollywood, and I reneged on my promise. Two years ago, *Moulin Rouge* dared me to stop seeing American movies for the rest of my life. I resisted my cultural intake to foreign movies. I took up the gauntlet and spent the next two weeks watching French movies about frigid

above: Scenes from *The Patriot* featuring Mel Gibson and Heath Ledger as father and son

Disposable films like *Gladiator* and *The Patriot* and *M:I-2* form a sort of cultural litmus test, separating those who genuinely love movies from those who go to see them as a sort of cultural chore.

kleptomaniacs and Chinese films about sexually repressed Beijing park police. By the time that ordeal was over, I was literally prostrate in front of the cineplex ticket office, begging the cashier to let me see *The Avengers*, even though I knew it would suck beyond belief.

My latest attempt to permanently secede from the cinephilic subculture lasted roughly four months. In that time, I saw only one film – the earnest but wan *Wonder Boys*, which did not make me feel like my self-imposed exile from the movie house was a foolish decision. Then came *Gladiator*.

Because I have a 13-year-old boy and am, in fact, a 13-year-old-boy, I saw *Gladiator* a minute-and-a-half after it was released. Although it is not much better than the gladiator movies I saw as a child, a kind of pre-pagan *Ben Hur*, *Gladiator* is the type of ebulliently silly film that always opens the official movie season, when Hollywood gets back to its knitting. In the US, serious, thoughtful, emotionally wrenching, unwatchable movies are always released in the fall and winter so that they can get their Academy Award nominations. The winter is the time of year when everyone in Hollywood tries to pretend that they are in *The Cider House Rules* or *The English Patient* business, when everyone knows that they are actually in the Adam Sandler and Meg Ryan business. At least, that's where all the money comes from.

There is something lugubrious about the fall and winter movie season, and not just because that's when Woody Allen releases his films. It is more in a general sense that Real Hollywood has gone off somewhere on sabbatical to get next year's flashy summer models ready, and in the meantime everyone will have to make do with films about the unmaking of a marriage or the making of *The Mikado*. Even when these films are good – and *Topsy-Turvy* is as fine a movie about the making of *The Mikado* as any of us are likely to ever see – they do not generate much excitement among the general populace because so few people go to see them, and because most of the people who do go to see them are the kinds of people who don't really like movies.

Disposable films like *Gladiator* and *The Patriot* and *M:I-2* form a sort of cultural litmus test, separating those who genuinely love movies from those who go to see them as a sort of cultural chore.

The question of whether these movies are any good or not is entirely beside the point: what matters is that their release officially confirms the opening of the Movie-going Season, during which Good will invariably triumph over Evil, the good-looking guy will get the great-looking girl, and Tom Cruise will once again be cast in the correct role.

By the end of the summer, after a blitzkrieg of John Travolta and Jim Carrey movies, we will all again be ready for something a bit less frothy, and once again films like *Magnolia* will surface. At which point, I will again make my annual vow to never go to the movies again. Until *Gladiator II* gets released. ●

Film Festival

Preview Special

*Filmgoers in cities along the eastern seaboard celebrate the coming of winter by moving cosily into festival mode: first Sydney, then Melbourne, then Brisbane. Non-believer **Barry Divola** wonders where is it going and when will it end?

S M, B IN THE TEXT INDICATES THE FILMS APPEARANCE IN SYDNEY MELBOURNE OR BRISBANE

>What the hell is a film festival meant to be in 2000? We're living in an era where Pamela Anderson hypes her *Barb Wire* movie in Cannes, and "out of competition" can mean that any old blockbuster gets a look-in. Meanwhile, Sundance, originally an alternative venue for filmmakers, is becoming establishment, a one-stop shop for the moguls and scenesters. Now satellite fests such as Slamdance claim to be the new voice of "true alternative", whatever that is.
At the same time, films as smart and lyrical as *American Beauty*, as inventive and off-the-wall as *Being John Malkovich*, and as breathlessly audacious as *Magnolia* have hit the multiplexes. And don't forget that last year a pseudo-documentary style horror movie that was shot on shaky digital video, and cost less than $100,000 to make, took over 200 million dollars worldwide. >In this sort of world, where many of the lessons taught by independent film have been absorbed by the bigger fish in the pond, where should film festival films be pitched? Sex, drugs and rock'n'roll?
>OK, that's an exaggeration. But if film festivals plastered these words across their advertising, maybe they'd have to start turning crowds away and choosing bigger venues. In 2000 Australian film festivals aren't havens of sticky carpet, used needles and discarded ear plugs, but they wouldn't exactly be hauled up before consumer affairs if they trumpeted the racier, rockier, and .. um... reefier material they have on offer. And believe me, they are on offer. e

Skin flicks

→It you haven t been getting much sex lately, then buy e ticket and watch other people do it or at the very least talk about it a lot. Both *Better Than Sex* (starring David Wenham and Susie Porter and opening at the Sydney festival) and *A Pornographic Affair* (S M B) are about a men and e woman who get together through lust but the their relationship turns into something else entirely. Although the latter is French don t go expecting a *Betty Blue*-style bonk fest – the two characters talk to the camera a lot but we hardly ever venture into the hotel room where the deed is done.

The rest steem among this year s sex-related films is issuing from the documentary department where at least three films focus on the porn industry. In a way it s a case of timing creating a buzz for fort 1997 s *Boogie Nights* pre empted the interest and with Wadd (M - see below) we get to peep inside the real world of John C. Holmes, on whom Mark Wahlberg s well endowed Dirk Diggler was loosely based.

The Other Hollywood (S) throws a wide net over the porn industry. "It s like a big super dysfunctional family," says one participant, sorting up the strange dynamics in a piece where "double penetration" is a term heard on location more often than in bed. At 7.30 in the morning you re up and on the set, says an actress called Chloe. At 9.30 you re having anal sex.

Infections, pregnancies, and AIDS tests are all discussed matter of factly and a huge range of characters are introduced, from a stressingly bright eyed ingenue to cynical old timers who have seen the reality of their situation.

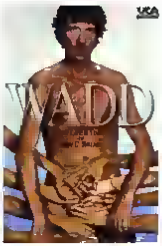
It s hard to know who deserves more sympathy: our forty something dependent on your bent. One thing s for sure: you won t be labeled rooting for director/actor Max Hardcore, a thoroughly abominable piece of work who could not spell misogyny but certainly is a master of it.

Whereas *The Other Hollywood* s encyclopaedic on its subject, *The Girl Next Door* (M B) chooses to focus on just one person, Stacy Valentine, and follows her story from unhappy Oklahoma housewife to porn queen. She traces her career as a get out of jail free card from a bad marriage, and claims that it s not the money that primarily attracted her to porn, but the fact that she s very good at sex. She looks like a Barbie doll that has become grotesquely over inflated in all the appropriate places, and although the phrases "porn" and "doll" tend to align themselves from the outset, there s a certain sadness to her brittle brevado.

Warning: don t view this one after a heavy meal, as in your face footage of rhinoplasty surgery is not conducive to good digestion. ●

Better Than Sex (top) *A Pornographic Affair* (bottom left) and *Boogie Nights* which pre-empted the interest in porn

Wadd: The Life and Times of John C. Holmes



>It s just as well Paul Thomas Anderson didn't decide to do a straight biopic of porn actor John C. Holmes when he made *Boogie Nights*, because the true story is almost too hard to believe. You would think there s enough of a tale in a guy who became a pioneer and virtual pop star of the adult film business, largely thanks to his 13 and a half inch penis. But that s just the tip of the iceberg – so to speak.

***Wadd*, named after one of Holmes' best known characters, Johnny Wadd, will keep you shaking your head in bewilderment as one revelation is peeled away to reveal another. Unless you re very familiar with the genre – and scorn is honour, I'm not – this will be a real eye opener.**

Holmes' story has enough twists and turns for ten people: abusive family, the strangest of marriage situations, porn stardom, drug addiction, pimping, burglary, implication in murder, contraction of HIV.

Meticulously told by an Altman-esque cast of colourful characters ranging from those involved in the porn game to LA police detectives, you can't help but think it s all been fabricated, like one of the many tall tales Holmes used to tell. Instead, you re left marvelling at the fact that this skinny, moustachioed guy who happened to be blessed in the trouser department, survived as long as he did. It s a testament to *Wadd* that by the end of the film, Holmes' dick has faded into the background, and it's the man s story that leaves you astounded. ●

Desperately seeking charlie

→There are not quite so many drugs on offer among this year's crop of films, but a couple of them definitely revel in the culture.

Who would you get to narrate the story of marijuana's troubled history with criminalisation? Willie Nelson or Cheech and Chong could have done the job handsomely, but noted herb-fancier Woody Harrelson got the gig on *Grass* (S.M.B). His narration style is flat and featureless – perhaps he was, you know, really getting in character – but the subject matter is a rich blend of stuff.

It's obvious where the film-maker's allegiances lie on the decriminalisation issue, but they don't have to argue their case to legalise it at all, as the airing of anti-weed propaganda over the years is so histrionic and hilarious. From the pulpy hysteria of *Reefer Madness* to Ronald and Nancy Reagan's freaky "Just Say No" campaign, we get taken on a journey of misinformation, and end up with a red-eyed view of history that's destined to become a cult classic.

Meanwhile, in the post-summer of love, drug culture of the 1970s, a bloke called Fuck Head (FH for short), is ricocheting in slow motion from one situation to the next, trying to do some sort of good, but earning his nickname in the process. This is *Jesus Son* (S.M.B), a picaresque tale based on a book of short stories by Denis Johnson.

Billy Crudup, with his goofy grin and wide eyes, wanders through the lead role encountering a swag of strange characters – Holly Hunter, as a woman whose men keep dying on her; Denis Leary, who plays Joe Buck to Crudup's Ratso Rizzo; and most impressively, Jack Black, as a pill-popping hospital orderly.

The story is rambling and fractured, offering more questions than answers, but it makes sense when you realise the teller is an addict. In fact, this doesn't feel like a 90s movie about the 70s, it feels like a 70s movie. And when Dennis Hopper turns up as a guy nursing four bullet holes from two waves, you almost believe it really is. ●

"The Sex Pistols should have happened, and did."
John Lydon

Blame it on the boogie

→The release in 1995 of Nick Hornby's book *High Fidelity*, about a thirtysomething bloke so preoccupied with pop music that he fails to see his relationship going down the drain, resounding through popular culture like guitar feedback through a Marshall amplifier. Well, resounded through the bit of pop culture inhabited by thirtysomething blokes, anyway.

Now the concept of obsessive fandom and the notion of music not just being background noise but an integral and defining soundtrack to a person's life was being discussed and portrayed in books and films. Indeed, the screen version of *High Fidelity* (S, M, B) will hit the festival circuit, pre-empting its release later in the year. This will be the first chance for those who cherish the novel to see if they've ruined the whole thing by shifting the action from London to Chicago, or whether the combination of actor John Cusack and director Stephen Frears can translate it successfully.

In other films with a beat, punk gets the definitive treatment in Julien Temple's *The Filth And the Fury* (S, see below), country music and its attraction to many Aboriginal men are investigated in *Buried Country* (S). The Brisbane Film Festival has a spotlight on films associated with the Beat movement, which always heckles to bebop and jazz, as the rhythms, improvisation and verve of the music provided inspiration for their writing.

But just as is often the case in the music world, it's from the edges that you find the real rough gems. *Benjamin Smoke* (M) is a bizarre comic doco about a cult musician from Georgia who also happens to be an HIV positive drag queen. Naturally, R.E.M.'s Michael Stipe is a fan and has produced some of his songs. Filmmaker Jem Cohen pitched together this home movie that proves outsiders usually have the best stories.

Chris Wicha goes one step further in *The Target Shoots First* (M). In a cross between a video diary and an instructional film for corporate climbers, he follows his own progress through Columbia House, a large American mail order record club. Hired as a young nun consultant on the emerging grungy/alternative scene of the early '90s, Wicha presents a mole's eye view of how youth culture is co-opted, repackaged and sold as a commodity. The remarkable thing is Wicha starts to become indoctrinated himself as he gets promoted to a position of some responsibility, but even though we know he is aware of selling out, he refrains from letting the camera's eye waver.

Crazy (S) utilises music in very unusual circumstances. It revolves around interviews with Dutch soldiers and officers in UN peacekeeping forces that have seen action in Cambodia, Lebanon, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. These first hand tales are as revealing as they are shocking. If you think you've got bad news fatigue and feel that you've become desensitised by endless reports from the trouble spots of the world, this is guaranteed to shake out the complacency.

Only one soldier is of the "I just did my job and it didn't affect me" school. The others have been profoundly marked by the horrors they saw. They have reacted in various ways – whether it's by descending into depression and alcoholism or writing a book. The ace up the sleeve of director Heddy Honigmann is that she got each subject to nominate a song or piece of music that they associate with their experiences. From Puccini to U2 and Guns 'N' Roses, we hear these songs while the camera lingers on the men's faces, the emotion playing through their eyes as they recall their particular war.

Your eyes will not be dry by the closing credits – guaranteed. ■

The Filth and the Fury

>Malcolm McLaren called The Sex Pistols his sculpture, his art project, his "little artful dodgers". The members of the band have always said that McLaren, their manager, was full of shit. This doco from Julien Temple lets them have their say, and then some. The Pistols in particular and punk in general have been discussed and dissected over the years in many different ways, but often it has been either too intellectualised or too cartoonish.

The Filth and The Fury, which takes its title from a tabloid newspaper headline the day following the band's infamous appearence on daytime television, manages to strike exactly the right balance between the two. Director Temple was there at the time the Pistols exploded onto the scene, and he even directed the 1980 film *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle*. With *Filth*, he makes the clever move of not just seeing punk in isolation, but placing it in context. We see London in the second half of the 1970s in all its glory – the riots, the unemployment, the racism, the poverty, the garbage piled in the streets because of an ongoing strike. As lead singer John Lydon says, "The Sex Pistols should have happened, and did."

Juxtaposing the noise, the energy, and the anger with other music, fashion and advertising of the time, you can see his point. The sad tale of Sid Vicious is played out to great effect too, including some remarkable interview footage with the pitiful bloke himself. "Where would you like to be?," an interviewer asks him after his incarceration following the death of girlfriend Nancy Spungen. "Under the ground," Sid replies, without an ounce of irony. All current interviews with the band members are filmed in semi darkness, as if they are in some sort of witness protection program. It's a nice touch to what is a definitive document and an exhilarating ride through the punk era. ■

The Filth and the Fury is screening at the Sydney Film Festival.

(above left to right)
Johnny Rotten and Sid Vicious on stage in *The Filth and the Fury*.
Country music and its attract on to many Aborig nal mus cians is investigated in *Buried Country*.
A thirtysomething bloke in *High Fidelity*.

Choice documentaries

>If it appears I'm favouring the festival documentaries over feature films, I am. I'd contend that fact is stranger (and stranger) than fiction in many festivals because the sticking possibility is higher with fiction films and because docos don't get as much exposure in the general marketplace. And unless they're picked up by television, festivals are one of the few venues for viewing them. Add to this the fact many recent films are semi-biographical: *Man On The Moon* about cult comedian Andy Kaufman, *The Hurricane* about boxer Rubin Carter, *Boys Don't Cry* about the sexually ambiguous Brandon Teena, *Erin Brockovich* about, well, Erin Brockovich. These are flesh and blood characters whose stories are so extraordinary that filmmakers were compelled to tell them.

Among the featured docos this year, *Long Night's Journey Into Day* [5, B – see sidebar] will leave you a blubbering mess. *A Conversation With Gregory Peck* [5, M] will make you want to adopt the star of *To Kill A Mockingbird* as your grandfather, in a straight but at times touching film about tagging along on his lecture circuit; *Belfast, Maine* [5] will leave you with half your day gone (it's over four hours long) as you watch men pulling in lobster-pots for 15 minutes at a time.

There are a couple of films this year that can be described as doco on doco. It's a bit like looking at something in a mirror by using another mirror. For instance, *A Brief History of Errol Morris* [5] is a doco about Errol Morris, the doco maker (or as he prefers to call himself, non-fiction filmmaker) well known for *The Thin Blue Line* and *Fast, Cheap And Out Of Control*. In turn, Morris's latest film, *Mr Death: The Rise And Fall Of Fred A. Leuchter, Jr* [5] is showing at the same festival. A former private detective, and student of philosophy and music (at Juilliard, no less), Morris is an obsessive, whether he's training his camera on someone accused of terrible crimes, or a guy who specialises in mole rats. *Mr Death* follows the story of Leuchter, who developed and maintained electric chairs, gas chambers and lethal injection devices for death row prisoners, before championing the cause of a Holocaust denier.

With the rise of "reality" TV in the guise of *Cops*, *Popstars* and their ilk, it's interesting to watch *Cinema Verite: Defining The Moment* [M, B], and find how the seeds were sown, but the product was perverted. This Canadian production can be a bit on the parochial side, but along the way they interview many of the giants in the field, including Karel Reisz (*We're The Lambeth Boys*), Bob Drew (*Primary*), Albert Maysles (*Salesman*) and D. A. Pennebaker (*Don't Look Back*). As Wolf Koenig points out, filming cinema verite is like having a $50,000 necklace of pearls, but without the five cent string, there's no structure and the whole thing falls apart. Getting back to those mirrors within mirrors, film-makers Fred Wiseman and Barbara Kopple are profiled here, with their latest films – *Belfast, Maine* and *A Conversation With Gregory Peck* – also on show. ■

(below) *Mr Death* (right top to bottom) *Belfast*, film-maker Frederick Wiseman; [illegible] s go on [illegible] work; [illegible] at Belfast, Maine

Long Night's Journey into Day

>A young black South African policeman is ushered into a room. He is partly responsible for the killing of innocent black men when the country was still under apartheid. There are half a dozen women in there – mothers of the men and boys who died. Even Spielberg wouldn't be able to pump up the soundtrack or use Tom Hanks to wrench any more emotion out of *Long Night's Journey Into Day*.

It's the real deal. One mother offers forgiveness and prays for him; another tells him that she will remember his face until the day she dies, and she will never forgive or forget.

This award winning doco is technically uneven and the pacing goes awry in places, too. But given the subject matter, it just can't fail. Deborah Hoffman and Frances Reid took their cameras into the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings to film people trying to come to terms with the aftermath of apartheid. Both black and white citizens were asking for amnesty from their crimes under the old regime.

The resulting drama and emotions that unfold will hit you in the heart and the gut. The filmmakers focus on a handful of situations including the magnanimous parents of murdered American student Amy Biehl who reconcile with those responsible for their loss and Eric Taylor, the white cop who killed a black activist in the name of Christianity, then felt remorse after seeing *Mississippi Burning* and reading Nelson Mandela's autobiography.

It's not all Disney endings, however. Hatred and recriminations still bubble, and the filmmakers aren't shy about showing them. But ultimately the whole process is seen to be a necessary step in the healing of a country. With the current situation in Zimbabwe, one wonders if any lessons will be learned from it in the near future. ■

Long Night's Journey Into Day is screening at the Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney film festivals.

All Men Are Liars a ground-breaking Australian film not

Flicktionary

Like going into a restaurant reading the menu and thinking "Oh, everything looks good!" one should beware the lure of the film festival blurb writer. More than once even the most astute viewer has been sucked in to seeing "hilarious comedies" that aren't funny, "atmospheric masterpieces" that are boring and a ground-breaking new Australian film that in fact turns out to be *All Men Are Liars*. Here's a reference guide to help you in the dark.

What they say	What it means
The first 20 minutes of this documentary are wordless using an interplay of images to create a chilly ambience	Nothing happens. You will fall asleep
The gritty realism of the film is reflected in the director's brave decision to work without a script.	There is no story
The gritty realism of the film is reflected in the director's brave decision to work without a script and not use boom microphones	There is no story and you can't hear what anyone is saying
The gritty realism of the film is reflected in the director's brave decision to work without a script, not use boom microphones and to utilise real people instead of actors	There is no story and you can't hear what anyone is saying but it doesn't matter because none of them are any good anyway
Norway's most well-known comic actor/director returns with the latest hilarious instalment in his series about the inept owner of a herring factory	Hilarious if you happen to be Norwegian. Otherwise, mystifying and terrible
It is Christmas Eve in a remote Mongolian village and young Gnrt is hoping for a goldfish	Go and have some lunch
A group of rinkempt but casually groovy inner-city twentysomethings look for love and meaning in their lives while dealing with sex, drugs and house-sharing.	You're watching a new Australian film.
German romance	Long, tortured silences occasionally broken up with face slapping and furious smoking of cigarettes
French comedy	Oxymoron.

Feature focus

Alienation. Isolation. Hoping for transformation or escape.

It may not sound like much of a hoot, but these are the major themes of many of this year's festivals' feature films.

New Waterford Girl

New Waterford Girl (S) – a Canadian girl longs to escape from her dead-end burg. She befriends the new kid in town, a tough cookie who teaches her how to fight the sleazy local boys.

Oil Warning (S) – a German boy longs to escape from his dead-end burg. He becomes a skinhead and discovers sex, comradeship, tattoos and violence.

The Lady Of The House (S) – a middle-aged woman living a reclusive existence in the country takes stock of her life when she allows a film crew to use her home.

Crane World (S) – a middle-aged Argentinian man who used to play in a one-hit wonder band from the 70s takes stock of his life when he becomes a crane driver.

Gigantic (S/B) and ***Idle Running*** (S/M) are both about young men who really need to strike out on their own and leave their listless, go-nowhere existence. They have been leading with their immediate anthropomorphic mates, in order to try to find some purpose in themselves. *Gigantic* is German and has the cool imprint of Tom Tykwer (*Run Lola Run*) as co-producer. But director Sebastian Schipper is obviously a fan of Hal Hartley. People yell at each other in bars about how shitty their lives are. The

music is simple and melancholy, there's a choreographed dance sequence to the Rex song. It's cute, episodic twentysomething angst but it's a bit too easily signposted. Dell's Good Will Hunting-*Idle Running* is from Steven's end is similar in intent and characterisation, but quite different in execution. Professional student end cynic, Dizzy can hurl and rave too – about how he hates art, Greenpeace and the hole in the ozone layer – all the while dragging lustily on cigarettes and getting full down drunk. When a tedious geek becomes Dizzy's roommate and his strange relationship with his girlfriend flounders, he has to make some big decisions for the first time in his life. It's less flashy than *Gigantic* but leaves a more lasting impression.

Tube Tales (S) tries to wave the flag for young Britannia, but ends up flapping in the breeze. It's a series of short films made from scripts sent into London weekly mag *Time Out*, and each is set around the city's underground train system. The three stories that work are directed by actors Ewan McGregor, Jude Law and Bob Hoskins. All three are longing, simple stories about people living in their own world, yet being crammed into a crowded city and confronting others as a result. Unfortunately, there are nine shorts in *Tube Tales* and a 33 1/3 percent satisfaction rate is not great. Perhaps they should have called it Mind The Gap or perhaps Running Out Of Steam.

Again and again in this year's features, you'll find main characters who are eternally dispossessed, listless, angry and lone. *Ratcatcher* (S/M – see sidebar) is grim but touching. ***Janice Beard 45 WPM*** (M – see sidebar) adds humour to the mix. The extraordinary situation is tested in ***The Return Of The Idiot*** (S/M), where a man who has spent his whole life around the walls of an asylum is let loose on friends and family, and turns out to be the only one who can see through their facilities and conceits. And in the reinvention stakes, ***The Legends Of Rita*** (S) is not just about a terrorist who leaves the movement and is given a new identity and a new life – when she is found out, she has to go through the process yet again and become something else, while removed from her original identity.

The theme song for all these people could be Eric Carmen's maudlin "All By Myself" – or even more appropriately, Gilbert O'Sullivan's teen jerker "Alone Again (Naturally)".

They're sitting by themselves, in the dark, alone with their thoughts, hoping to be moved, enlightened, changed or transported to a better place. Which come to think of it, isn't a bad metaphor for attending film festivals. ■

(top left clockwise) *Oil Warning*, *The Lady of the House*, *Return of the Idiot*, *Gigantic* (below), *The Legends of Rita*

Janice Beard 45 WPM

>This is the story of a girl who plays up her little story, and a boy who plays his down. Each has their own reasons. At the film's centre is Janice Beard (played with a fine mix of mousiness and spunk by Eileen Walsh), a dowdy, ditzy 23-year-old who moves to London from Scotland.

Janice's mother is agorephobic and hasn't left the house since Janice was born, mainly due to the fact that her husband died in the delivery room from stress. Despite less-than-competent secretarial skills, Janice scores a job in a car company that is about to launch a new model. There she has to cope with the gaggle of girls the secretaries, led by the pouting Julia (Patsy Kensit), and a crush that she develops on office boy Shaun (Rhys Ifans) who may not be all he appears to be. One of the more commercial films of this year's festival crop, and although it sometimes borders on the wacky, it's a real charmer that consistently wins points from warm performances and a cruisey script.

Those involved with the recent catastrophe that was the atrocious *Mad Cows* should watch this and take notes. A caper following the exploits of a fish-out of water leading lady doesn't have to be an un-watchable mass after all. ■

Janice Beard 45 WPM is screening at The Melbourne Film Festival.

Ratcatcher

>This is not a foreign language film, but it has sub-titles. And after about 15 seconds you can tell why. Set in Glasgow, the accents are thicker than haggis, and the dialect is only a second cousin to everyday English.

It's the 1970s in a housing commission area near a canal: a world of squalor, rotting garbage, rails, grey skies and brutality. James, a scruffy 13-year-old, is our guide, and a tragedy befalls him in the first ten minutes which weighs on him for the rest of the film. He only has two lifelines – his friendship with a girl who puts out for the local lads in a sad bid for love and acceptance, and an afternoon bus trip he takes to a new housing estate under construction near a Irish field. The grimness is interspersed with characters desperately clinging to each other, searching for some solace, but there's sweetness and gallows humour on display too.

Any rays of hope have an air of magic realism about them, leaving us to wonder if they're real or imagined. Director Lynne Ramsay makes us smile at the end, but it's a pretty sad smile. ■

You saw it here first

Want to be a total bore at your next dinner party? The following films are coming to cinemas in the second half of 2000, but you can see them all before general release at this year's festivals.

High Fidelity (Buena Vista - Aug/Sept) - S

The Filth And The Fury (Dendy - June 29) - S

A Room For Romeo Brass (Dendy - Aug) - S, M, B

Jesus' Son (New Vision - Aug) - S, M, B

A Pornographic Affair (Newvision - July) - S, M, B

Better Than Sex (Newvision - undated) - S

The Wonder Boys (REP - July 27) - M

Cultural debate anyone?

Why are we so scared to speak out?

the getting of wisdom **maya stange**

→It is a wonderful thing as an actor, to be asked to write something. Anything. How often are actors called on to discuss, debate or vent our opinions? I could ask the same about directors and producers, and to a lesser extent, writers. Individuals in our community are not called on as thinkers, as social and political commentators...or to comment on greater philosophical and moral issues. We are not given this space and nor do we take it. I think that the problem lies with the level of criticism and debate among our critics and our filmmakers.

Criticism is absolutely vital to filmmaking, and indeed to any form of creation. Criticism should contribute to our creative process, telling us where we have made breakthroughs and alerting us to where we have failed. It should give our audience a sense of why a particular film is interesting or culturally important, beyond whether it would be an amusing way to spend a Friday night. The reviews in the paper will tell us to see it or not to see it, but they won't tell us much more than that.

Let me be clear and distinguish this attack from the usual whinge. I am not calling for a more "intellectual" critical paradigm; the Freudian feminist and cool, post-modern brands of film theory found in university cinema and cultural studies departments. These schools of criticism turn in on themselves like a snake. They necessarily bring their own discourse to the reading of a film and often completely misunderstand the intentions of the filmmaker, while simultaneously alienating a lot of potential audience members.

Nor am I calling for a more literate or broadly educated reviewer. There is no lack of cleverness here. But how often have we been particularly unnerved to read a reviewer intelligently and articulately ripping an Australian film to shreds because of a perceived failure to reach its potential as cinematic art, when the same reviewer, often in an adjacent paragraph, will play the "It's just entertainment" card and thereby assume the role of a cheerfully obtuse media bunny for a truly B grade and innately unambitious import.

What I am saying is that criticism in this country rarely speaks to a film in relation to its social context, or with an understanding of the film as a social document. Our critics act as though our filmmakers have nothing to say. And on the other hand, our filmmakers often act like they don't have anything to say either.

Thank God for people like Lynden Barber, who writes with a knowledge of film that rivals the filmmakers themselves. He provides empathy without condescension and, most importantly, understands the responsibility of the critic within our industry: to provoke, to challenge, to offer ideas, to move us forward.

Criticism is a generative act as well as a deconstructive one and the critic has a duty above and beyond the review. They have the potential to create a space in which filmmakers are allowed, or required to take the political and social ground.

We are, however, also responsible for our own cultural marginalisation: our directors and producers behave as if tabloid terrorists or box-office bullies are lurking in the shadows, ready to pounce on the first sign of pretension. As for our actors, well our disempowerment is institutionalised. Fear of causing displeasure, fear of unemployment, or worse, perhaps, the fear of suffering the indignity of polite smiles, glazed looks and patronising giggles such as those that greeted Rachel Griffiths when she empowered herself as a politicised individual at the opening of Melbourne's casino. Ironically, this example provides a cause of hope: actors like Griffiths and Sacha Horler are tapping into one of the only traditions around: a tradition of idiosyncratic, opinionated women that links these actresses – via the likes of Judy Davis – back to Australia's early (by world standards) emancipation movement.

This is but a small glimmer of hope. It is still true to say that the opinionated artist, of any trade, is unwelcome. Is it any wonder then that social change in this country has become the domain of the media barons and their lackeys: the politicians, devoid of the imaginative Utopian ideas that only inspired leaders and artists can advocate?

Let me turn to the republic referendum as an example. Was there ever a debate that so clearly needed a visionary, powerfully imagined contribution? It was often said that a change to a republic was "merely" a symbolic act, and I say yes, it is symbolic. Symbols are what artists deal with (along with advertising executives). It is our bread and butter work: imbuing image and action with meaning. And it is only because our artists were not in the public spotlight, charging that symbol with meaning that blandness and conservatism won the day.

I was watching Robert Dessaix on television the other day, trying to explain to a panel of bemused French men that there is debate among Australian artists, but that there is no forum for them. They had asked him why artists were not more involved in the Republic debate. In fact, prominent actors and directors had been vocal on the issue, but it didn't seem to have much impact outside their own circle except perhaps amongst a small inner-city audience. We are simply not looked to by wider Australia on these issues.

Historically, artists have been cultural leaders, thinkers, commentators, dissenters and social critics.

How strong is our current role in Australian culture?

Where are our Spike Lees, our Ken Loachs, our Tim Robbins or Mike Leighs? Australia at the moment is rich soil for ferocious debate. I think it is a perfect time to be more vocal, more involved, and more critical of the world we inhabit, both in what we say in the public forum, and in what we make.

The factors that create a brand of apolitical actor or artist are inextricable from a larger social problem but we must take the lead and work together, and together with those that have the public space: the critics, so that the next time the republic debate comes around, or for that matter any issue of national conscience, the contribution of the artistic community is not reduced to the sight of Les Murray retreating behind his pay-cheque. ●

Our critics act as though our filmmakers have nothing to say. And on the other hand, our filmmakers often act like they don't have anything to say either.

Maya Stange is currently in NYC filming *XX/XY*. She made her feature film debut portraying a lead character in 1999 opposite Martin Donovan in Bill Bennett's *In A Savage Land*.

Nijinsky Dances Again

After a devastating experience with a recent film shoot in Hawaii, Paul Cox is working on the project he has wanted to make for a quarter of a century. **Michaela Boland** went on location.

Production Designer Tony Cronin gets made up as an extra as Paul Cox and Chris Haywood look on

→ON LOCATION

→It's an unremarkable day in suburban Adelaide and in a downstairs kitchen in the Norwood Town Hall a dozen older women are preparing lunch. A fortnightly elderly citizens' event is being held with an accordion player for entertainment, as the smell of ratatouille floats up the worn back stairwell to where a very different type of industriousness is underway. The world-renowned, yet often derided filmmaker Paul Cox is hard at work on his latest undertaking, *Nijinsky*, a feature length docu-drama based on the diary of the man considered the greatest male dancer of all time, Kiev-born Vaslav Nijinsky (1890-1950). Written in St Moritz in 1919 during a traumatic period in his life, the diary, titled *Cahiers*, reveals the dancer in the grip of madness.

Cox, who has been wanting to make *Nijinsky* for 25 years, is now three months into what will probably be a 12 month labour of love. With the Nijinsky family's approval for the project, he has been gathering shots for the past decade. It is being constructed in a similar vein to Cox's 1987 examination of the painter Vincent Van Gogh, *Vincent - The Life and Death of Vincent van Gogh*.

Spoken word diary entries will overlay a post-Christ montage designed to represent and illustrate diary extracts read by Sir Derek Jacobi (*Gladiator*, *I Claudius*).

Neither strictly a documentary nor a feature film, *Nijinsky* has been financed as a documentary by the Dutch and Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC). SBS and German financiers classify it as a feature. Film Victoria rejected Cox's funding application altogether, which is why the Melbourne-based auteur is filming in Adelaide.

Executive producer Kevin Lucas believes it was because Cox supplied his usual developed treatment of *Nijinsky* but not a completed script per se. Other financiers had signed up on the strength of his previous films.

It's in a class of definable category, which sort of makes it interesting. Lucas enthuses. With the FFC considering it not a feature film, it escapes the requirement of having a distributor attached. But Film Victoria just looked at the treatment and they looked at Paul and said, no.

The argument is that Paul Cox has had his time. He's had lots of money over the years, blah blah blah, but I've always maintained that people like Paul Cox are invaluable to our filmmaking community and in fact reflect the maturity of the community.

Lucas, whose company Music ArtsDance films specialises in arty films, disapproves of the prevailing funding culture which he sees as obsessed with discovering the next bright thing at the expense of nurturing experience.

Cox adds that Film Victoria sent him a letter saying more or less, "We're very pleased to have somebody of your status living in our state but we wish your international reputation would bring international money."

That was the reason for not funding me. It told them all to get fucked and for four or five years I didn't work there at all. I worked overseas.

The South Australian Film Corporation has embarked, in recent years, on a drive to make that state a haven for low budget filmmakers, eagerly accommodated Cox.

Originally a $4 million project with full ballet re-creations, *Nijinsky*'s budget has been pared back closer to $1 million. I think this is far wiser, choreography executive producer Lucas.

His approach will be longer lasting. This one allows him to make a really pure Paul Cox film.

Cox, who turns 60 this year, was born in the Netherlands and moved to Australia in 1963. He entered the film industry as a stills photographer before moving into making 16mm films and later bigger budget features.

His films are, for the most part, intensely personal and made on small budgets. A self proclaimed risk taker, who considers himself too much of an oddball and an outsider to actually count anywhere, Cox despises modern movies. But he has embraced technology with an IMAX title to his credit, *The Hidden Dimension* (1997).

His first feature, *The Journey* (1970), was a sombre

below The clown Petrouchka (Leigh Warren)

above Doon Hastie as the Blue God

narrative exploring the loneliness of a middle-aged man haunted by the past". And indeed themes of loneliness and aging distinguish some of his best films, including *Man of Flowers* (1983) and *A Woman's Tale* (1991). Other titles include *Golden Braid* (1990) where actor Chris Haywood's character falls in love with a lock of hair. *My First Wife* (1984) is widely regarded as Cox's most personal film. Starring Wendy Hughes and John Hargreaves in a poetic exploration of emotions, the director admits it was inspired by the collapse of his first marriage. Haywood has featured in at least eight Cox films. Today he's working his way through the backstage dressing room asking the assembled cast and crew if they want a cup of coffee.

Adelaide-based troupe the Leigh Warren Dancers are on set. Brilliantly costumed and made-up to represent key roles performed by Nijinsky during his career, the nine male and female dancers are required to pose as the dancer on camera and are involved in a series of walk-throughs.

Leigh Warren is Petrouchka. Her white painted face peeps out of a white blouse above red pantaloons and knee-high red leather boots. Dressed to represent Nijinsky's Blue God, Doon Hastie stands just five and a half feet tall. His naturally curly black hair is cropped tight around his brilliant blue painted face and body, which is clothed in a gold trimmed stretch velveteen T-shirt and shorts.

Beyond the dressing room, in the Town Hall's auditorium two spotlights have been set up on the floor in front of the stage. Two figures, who later turn out to represent critics (one played by Nijinsky's producer Kevin Lucas), are posed as though in deep discussion. Neither fully faces the camera.

Cinematographer Hans Sonneveld is peering through the lens. Cox is fussing between the camera and his actors. There's not a director's chair in sight. With the shot composed, the dance troupe emerges from the stage wings. They break the concentrated silence which has hung heavily over the auditorium throughout the morning. Cox needs quiet to concentrate on set, even though no sound is being recorded because the entire film will be overlaid with music and the diary passages.

Haywood clambers onto the stage to guide the

Alida Chase choreographs David McAllister and Vicky Attard in *Spectre de la Rose*

Choreographer Leigh Warren and dancer David McAllister

dancers down onto the floor. He explains they'll be required to walk through the two shot one by one. Cox calls "action" and the camera comes to life with a clunking mechanical whirr and the dancers file past the critics. Cox comments "Very good" then adds "We'll do it once again".

Cox bought the camera being used for *Nijinsky* years ago in Germany. "It had Leni Riefenstahl on it, so it was probably from one of her films," he explains. Made before the World War I and used to shoot *Vincent*, Cox says it's like "an old Rolls Royce".

Chris Haywood's role on set is difficult to define. "I don't have a role," the actor says. "I am part of a collaborative group putting Cox's dreams together and titles are not necessarily applicable in this production." Haywood explains. "People just do whatever is needed to be done. You make suggestions about how the set should look or how it should be lit or what we should be doing. Cuxy's very generous in his collaborative nature. Of course he's unsure he makes this film but he asks people to make suggestions.

"Officially I play Oscar who is just this guy who walks in and walks out. I'm principally here to assist Cox because in the past I've done exactly the same thing on a number of films and it's I suppose a bit of a sign between between departments and Cox."

"The formality that would go with normal filmmaking is not an important part of the production process. We left Melbourne two weeks ago and no one knew what we would shoot when we got here but every day we've shot the most extraordinary stuff. We knew we'd have to shoot the ballet. We knew we had to record some elements of the story but beyond that there was nothing. Locations were literally arrived at the day before. I know that happens in other productions but without the panic and the normal circus that goes with it."

Alida Chase is a former principal dancer with The Australian Ballet has been employed as the dance consultant on *Nijinsky*.

"I'm giving a dance person's point of view on the content and style," she explains.

Chase has been researching Nijinsky for 18 months through books. "That's all there is, there's no footage, only one tiny little clip of him at the end of the second world war shortly before he died. She was one of a group of four led by Cox who toured the UK, France, Holland and Russia earlier in the year shooting key scenes. With a handful of costumes, working eight hours a day, Chase found the experience "quite intense".

"I was Petrouchka lost in the forest and I was the shadowy nymph in the south of France."

After wrapping in Adelaide, the group will return to Europe to complete the location shooting.

Paul Cox's next film, due for release later this year, is called *Innocence*. Another low budget endeavour exploring first love revisited, it stars Charles (Bud) Tingwell with husband and wife Terry Norris and Julie Blake.

Kevin Lucas describes making *Innocence* in 1999 as like "a tiny little catharsis" for Cox.

Before *Innocence* he was employed to direct *Molokai: The Story of Father Damien*, a Belgian production shot in Hawaii.

Starring Derek Jacobi, Kris Kristofferson, Peter O'Toole and David Wenham as the priest Father Damien, *Molokai's* budget was pegged close to AU$10 million when production commenced in 1998. Written by John Briley (*Gandhi*), it's the story of a Belgian priest who became a national hero after going to Hawaii to work with lepers circa 1864.

Three weeks into the shoot, Cox was sacked as director after the producers decided they didn't like the rushes. Work stopped for a few days before Cox was reinstated at the crew's insistence. But the drama didn't stop there. During editing Cox discovered the producers were simultaneously cutting their own version of the film which they went on to premiere in The Netherlands.

Legal action and dramas played out in the international press followed before Cox was reinstated as director. His version of the film premiered last year at the Toronto Film Festival.

"I wrote a book about it called *The Making, The Unmaking and The Remaking of Father Damien* but my lawyers told me I'd go to jail for a while so I have not published it," Cox says dryly.

Kevin Lucas says the director "endured an excruciating period with *Molokai* which so far doesn't have an Australian distributor."

Cox says "It was terrible, absolutely. We put everything into that film and that was two years of my life. Thank you very much and the true story will be revealed one day."

"It was like being in Vietnam in a war zone. I was sacked a few times and when they couldn't sack me I took them to court. Then they took me to court. Then they finally fucked the film all together and had a big premiere in Belgium and because I didn't go I was again targeted because I refused to be part of it. Then the film flopped, of course. Like nobody's business, then they actually asked me to redo it the way I had conceived it in the first place, which I did. Then they dared to bring out the old version again in Holland, recently where I crashed the press screening, so it made a big scandal in Holland."

Lucas describes Cox's *Molokai* period as "a crisis of the soul of any sense of logic and rationale. And a miserable and horrible experience." He's doing his utmost to ensure *Nijinsky* comes to truition. "Never again will Cox relinquish control of a project."

So is Cox happy with the way Nijinsky is progressing?

"Happiness is for fools." ●

> **"The argument is that Paul Cox has had his time. He's had lots of money over the years, blah blah blah... but I've always maintained that people like Paul Cox are invaluable to our filmmaking community and in fact reflect the maturity of the community."**

* Australian Film 1900-77, Pike & Cooper, p 299

In defence of research and development

Not glamorous, not sexy, just essential

the box **paul harris**

→**Late in 1999** the Australian Film Commission announced it would cease funding the Australian Film Institute's research and information centre from December 2000. The move was part of a broader refocus "on the AFC's core function of development – project development, practitioner development and industry development – it is not the role of the AFC to fund the provision of services to the education sector".

A joint AFC/AFI working group is currently reviewing the centre's future with findings due in coming months. Twenty years ago I was employed by the Australian Film Institute to work as a research assistant in what was then known as the George Lugg Library, basically a back room full of dusty tomes, mouldering back copies of film journals and sundry books piled up in unruly, toppling stacks.

The library's bread-and-butter work in those days was for the film society movement, festivals and in-house work on behalf of AFI's exhibition activities and the National Film Theatre of Australia.

The phone would constantly ring and visitors dropped in with the most arcane inquiries: *Do you have the text of Abbott and Costello's Who's On First routine?* We did. *Can I obtain information on the features directed by Michael Curtiz in his native Hungary prior to his Hollywood career?* That was tougher but doable. *Where can a student filmmaker obtain the services of an armourer?* The *Encore Directory* had not yet been invented to easily solve this problem. *How can I find a print of Victor Turin's Turksib?* If you don't understand that last one then maybe you need the services of Rand Yourself.

It all seems quaintly nostalgic and vaguely esoteric as we enter a new millennium traversed by information superhighways to ruminate on the various questions that were being hurtled at our tiny staff of two back in the prehistoric era when research facilities, such as they were, seemed rudimentary at best.

But from little acorns, as the saying goes, a one-stop source of information gradually developed to the point where it could be favourably compared on a proportionate basis with the American film industry's invaluable Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy Of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The British Film Institute's library provides a similar function in the UK. They both act as vital repositories and resources for film-related information.

The Australian Film Institute's Research and Information centre has faithfully serviced the film community's need for information relating to all aspects of the industry on both a local and international level. The problem here is that the Centre, like the once mighty BHP, is a quiet achiever which carries out its vital work in a backroom atmosphere, not unlike a war room or concrete bunker from a British World War II movie where the bollocks moving markers around on a large-scale map determine the future outcome of civilisation, not on the battlefield but from a remote command post.

And that's just the problem. R and I is not a sexy high profile activity like the Institute's awards or exhibition endeavours and tends to get taken for granted. But from their concrete bunker, truly dedicated staff performs its tasks without much fanfare on a modest budget.

The comprehensive collection dates back over a quarter of a century. It was originally under the stewardship of the Victorian Federation of Film Societies, which are currently being microfilmed and digitised (the Australian Film Commission has contributed $54,000 toward the project).

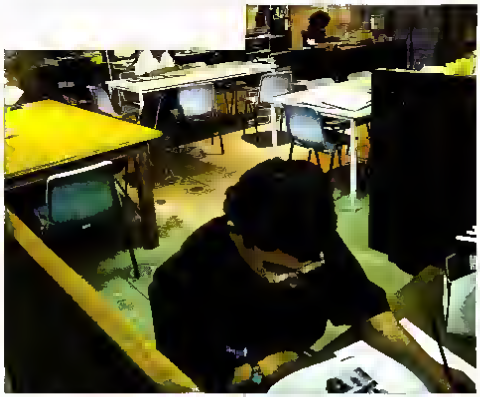
Although based in Melbourne the Library serves the film national community and boasts a large and diverse client base.

To illustrate just one important aspect of how the Library fosters industry development, you need to look no further than the online indexing service which has been created to enable clients to browse material from a range of local journals not previously indexed on established databases.

The service, available on the net at www.afi.org.au, has been of particular interest to international researchers. Many of the books which have been published in recent years on Australian cinema carry glowing endorsements in their forewords, acknowledging the invaluable help of the Centre.

Besides the academic community the centre is regularly used by the film industry and national media.

The diverse range of requests for information reflect the scope and scale of the entire film community. If anything a service such as this, which has been described by the National Library as a national heritage collection, needs an injection of funds, not the threat of cutbacks. ■



AFI research & information

Subsequently acquired by the AFI, the Library's holdings have since grown into a unique resource comprising books, journals, news clippings, searchable databases, stills, screenplays, cast and crew directories, press kits and the nation's largest collection of newspapers.

"The phone would constantly ring and visitors dropped in with the most arcane inquiries."

The vagaries of placing products

Tom Cruise and Kodak have teamed up for a *M:I-2* product placement bonanza. But **Mike Houghton** warns indie producers the rules of the game favour big media conglomerates over independents every time.

→Andreas Bangerter knows what he likes in a bowtie: an elegant, time-driven pocket and a dapper brand who's always in control. Why? Because Bangerter markets Omega watches, and he's learned the first rule of successful product placement: "Don't just stick it in, make it relevant."

"First, we were happy to get a watch on somebody's wrist," he says. "Until we realised we were the only ones who noticed that the actor was wearing an Omega. So we started filming for close-ups in which the brand name was visible."

Getting close-ups that didn't draw attention to themselves, however, meant special filming in the action/thriller genre, where shots are typically filmed on the run, necessitating insert shots of watch faces.

The second saga of relationship was a search for scripts with heroes who conveyed similar personalities to the Omega brand. An individual who never tells time with James Bond was seen as a perfect match.

"We wanted to ensure that the watch was worn by people who were cool and in control of their destinies," says Bangerter. "And that the watch appeared in situations that communicated these qualities – for example, James Bond could be wearing a tuxedo one minute and scuba diving the next, while wearing the same Omega watch."

But the relationship with Bond went beyond conformance. Witness recent newspaper ads and in-store promotions showing a tuxedoed Bond sporting an Omega with the tagline "James Bond's watch." Because the Bond brand is recognised by almost everybody, whether they watch the films or not, the placement served as an excuse to link Bond and Omega in mainstream advertising. According to Bangerter, the campaign increased Omega sales from "the very first day."

James Bond's choice

OMEGA

SPOT THE PRODUCT PLACEMENT

It all started in the 1940s, when an ad agency came up with the idea of giving Hollywood studios diamond necklaces to adorn their stars with – according to Mary Gabriel, writing recently in *Variety*.

It wasn't until 1982, however, that product placement attracted attention as a sales booster on a par with TV or print. That's when the Hershey company paid to have a packet of Reece's Pieces strategically placed in a fridge opened by ET. According to Gabriel, the product's sales increased by 66 percent.

More recent examples of product placement spotted by Gabriel include:

- A bottle of the anti-depressant Zoloft caressed by Bruce Willis in *The Sixth Sense* (clever, because Willis' character is trying to determine his wife's state of mind from the contents of her medicine cabinet, so the placement isn't incongruous).
- Robert DeNiro watching a TV commercial for Merrill Lynch investments in *Analyze This*; and
- Roman Polanski's camera, in the upcoming *The Ninth Gate*, lingering on a Shell logo while one of Satan's minions fills up. (Shell apparently aren't too worried about who their brand is associated with – or maybe it's a word play on "Shell" and "Hell".)

And beyond nifty cameo appearances in Hollywood hits, Bond and *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*. Not only did the bad guy appear in the film, but he nicked an ad agency and created Austin Powers billboards across the US, the aim being to attract publicity and have transatlantic photographed crafting the brew. By creating cinema and nightclub-themed marketing, hoping to snare lucrative Generation Xers who media-literate and lifestyle-aware are getting harder to reach through traditional advertising.

Which explains why the placements are often dropped during the shoot or cutting room, from placing products is tiny next to the cost of a typical Hollywood film (about US$55 million), so Product Placements can be dropped at a whim. For example, Omega paid to put its watches on to the wrists of Will Smith and Gene Hackman in *Enemy of the State*, only for Hackman to decide at the last minute that his character should wear a cheaper brand (all of Omega's money was refunded). Luckily, the actors improvised a joke in which Omega man Smith chided Hackman for wearing a cheap watch, producing a free plug and drawing much more attention than if both men had been wearing Omegas.

Which raises a crucial point – that product placement is largely affected by context. Tasa Mercedes appearance in the Tom Cruise movie *The Firm*. The other of a flashy car is a major motivator for Cruise's character to join a Mafia-controlled law firm. It therefore makes perfect sense for the protagonist to open and shut over the car and to the camera to dwell on its dropping, but also made sense Mercedes thought to pay a rumoured US$1 million to change the car concerned from a BMW (in John Grisham's novel) to a Merc.

Wacko for the land where anything goes but, to a far cry from the situation in Australia where paid product placements struggle for acceptance. Our biggest (perhaps only) placement agency, Strawcast, is primarily concerned with providing free food vehicles to film and TV productions. Paid product placements in Australian films are just now emerging.

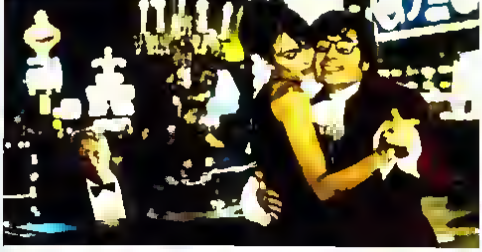
"No agency in Australia is making money from product placements alone," a local agent (who asks not to be named) told *Cinema Papers*. "After five years, I'm about to completely restructure my business."

Australia's a minor image at the US, where marketers are keen to place products in films. Here, what little impetus there is for product placements comes from producers. Not because they understand or like them, they're just struggling to hear their film project.

"I get an awful lot of young producers expecting the corporate coffers to magically open," our consultant says. "It doesn't happen like that."

"We've had several approaches from product companies talking about product placements, asking us to act almost as agents for them," says a senior executive in one of Australia's leading ad agencies (who surprisingly asked not to be named).

Predictably, most such pitches fail. But the solution isn't to producers to sell



Austin Powers

Looking for Alibrandi

The Castle

Wog Boy

NO GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS

A product placement consultant who also asked not to be named (it's a secretive business) says he's constantly approached by small time producers "hoping I can persuade a big corporation to cough up money to enable them to produce their film. It breaks my heart to have to tell them they won't get the sort of money they (want). Otherwise I'd be out there doing it myself."

Truth is, in Australia most products are placed in "contra" deals. The Showcase agency supplies productions with the use of Ford cars that production companies would otherwise have to hire.

According to Palace Films' Tari Brady, the reason "lack of bums on seats.

"It Hollywood's making *Lethal Weapon Five* with Mel Gibson and Danny Glover then Pepsi or whoever knows it's going to have international distribution and appeal."

Because this isn't the case with most Australian films, producers lack the clout to get sponsors aboard. Plus, Brady doubts that the Australian arms of multinationals have the autonomy to make such unconventional marketing decisions. "My impression," he says, "is that producers don't try [to secure PPs] much any more, because it hasn't flown in the past."

A senior executive in one of Australia's biggest ad agencies blames marketing managers for not grasping product placement opportunities. "Most clients are short term-biased because the marketing manager is 30-something and wanting to climb the ladder, and you do that by achieving a damn good result in a short period, then moving on. Most of them are only in the job for three to four years."

Nor is product placement particularly lucrative for the middle people. "Few Australian consultants make money from PPs alone," he says.

In the US, says another consultant (who yet again asked not to be named), every major studio has a department of up to 10 people "who read scripts and assess opportunities, then go to product placement agencies and say there's an opportunity for a soft drink or maybe a car. Studios in Australia don't have such departments."

However, the consultant expects the Australian scene to change. "Marketers are now a lot more open about product placement – in the past they hid it. Now product companies know we're here, they come to us."

Fine sentiments, but the consultant still insisted that we not use her or her company's name.

out and insist on scripts extolling Alka Seltzer to include innonguruous nose ups and dandruff and other badgins. Nonetheless, producers need to "reject product placements that conflict with their creative vision or focus in good or their movies and the products they pitch."

The moment you notice a product placement, he says, "it's failed."

Instead, producers need to be attuned to moments in their scripts where an product and plot may coveta as happened with Mondons and *The Film*.

And it's not only producers who have to wise up – businesses and their ad agencies need to find the right product placements are tricky. Why you may ask, did so many of the interviewees in this story not want their names or their companies named? Because, says our advertising exec, "Product planement is a secretive area. The public feel that they pay their money at the box office and that the eds should stop the moment the lights go down."

But things may be changing. Traditional advertising is losing young people, they're psyntologically resistant to hackneyed formats and they are tip to interactive media like the world of computer games, where old ad formats don't work. To cement the loyalty of a Gen X, alternative, conservative business, "we're being forced to experiment with new forms of advertising, including product placement. Consequently, more of the offers producers put to his agency are being seriously looked at by clients – especially after locally financed hits like *The Castle* and *The Wog Boy*.

"You're buying a little ticket – the exec says – but not a very expensive little ticket. You're talking the equivalent of one or two national TV spots, $20-$30,000] for incidental placement. Get your product into a hit movie and you've won lotto. Whilst it's not. As mentioned, the most successful product placements are organic – to a script – they stand out, but not gratuitously. Like the running gag in *The Castle*, where the family needs out ads from the *Trading Post* as if they're snippets from a life style magazine. No money or barter seems to have been involved there, but it shows combining a snippet of even placement with box office appeal can happen in Australia."

But producers hoping to get low budget films off the ground have little to celebrate. According to one nonsensical product placement will really take off as a means of cross-promotion is the multinational groups Fox Nine Ltd and Village Roadshow having films to promote other aspects of their businesses. "It's been happening on TV for years," the exec says.

Channel Nine have been the masters of cross promotion for 20 years, with articles in *Women's Weekly* would include Channel Nine stars. While *The Midday Show* would feature a pin-up who was centrepiece in that month's *Women's Weekly*. Kerry Packer owns both the *Women's Weekly* and Channel Nine.

"The internal advertising programs on TV has also led to product placement by stealth," our exec says.

"Think of a lot of TV programs don't include product placement, they *are* product placement. A homemaker show may use a brand of paint that also happens to plant normal colours with the stencil, thus giving the client a value add to their paid advertising. No money changes hands, but the net result is the same."

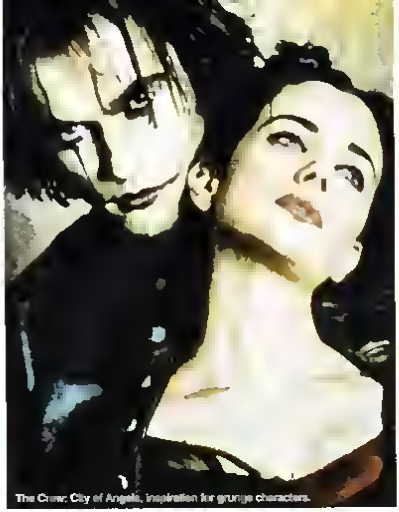
Meanwhile, recent Roadshow teen flick *Looking for Alibrandi* prominently features a single by Kylie Hedi, who is signed to the company's own recording

> "I get an awful lot of young producers expecting the corporate coffers to magically open," our consultant says. "It doesn't happen like that."

label. The band, their CD and the movie can then receive wide and favourable exposure on the company's radio network Austereo (Fox, MMM, 2Day). And with media conglomerates growing ever bigger, opportunities for cross promotion will increase.

On the upside, product placements well used could free more money for Australian films without overt spiking occurring on screen. The downside is only certain films suit product placements. Expect period films to disappear in a future in which product placements dominate film funding.

Over time, producers should gravitate towards films whose settings and characters are more PP friendly. The danger is that city – exemplified by the Bond franchise. Fleming's original Bond was a brooding, vengeful character and been Connery and Timothy Dalton's Bonds reflected some of this. Today's Bond – beloved by BMW, Omega and others – seems to have no more personality than the luxury brands he flaunts. ●



The Crew: City of Angels, inspiration for grunge characters.

With some surprise, **Adrian Martin** discovers a new Australian film does good grunge. But then there's all the others...

Getting down

→**Is Australian grunge** – as they like to say in teen movies like *Clueless* (1995) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992) – so twenty minutes ago? In the mid-90s, the publishing industry tried briefly to convince us all that a new local artistic movement had been born due to the happy coincidence of novels by Christos Tsiolkas (*Loaded*), Justine Ettler (*The River Cafe*) and Andrew McGahan (*Praise*). By the time two of these books had made it to the screen (in *Loaded*'s case, as *Head On*, 1998), the movement had already dispersed.

The authors who had been lumped with the tag moved on to other projects in other styles. The American B-movie maestro Roger Corman, on a quick trip through Australia, announced his intention to make a feature version of the Melbourne drugs and garbage black-and-white short *Happy Little Vegemites* – but it didn't materialise. In the meantime, grunge quickly filtered through to the realms of fashion, design and advertising, in consumable form. Remember the ephemeral controversy about a death chic photo spread in youth magazines, a downmarket crib of Bill Henson's lowdry glamorous art, snaps of wasted naked junkies?

And then the whole grimy carnival seemed to disappear altogether, at least in the eyes of the mass media, hungry for the next trend. Or maybe grunge just went underground for a spell – since I suspect that the subterranean impulse to get down and dirty never really goes away.

If we consider grunge as a cultural force or sensibility reaching beyond a few contemporaneous novels and the films made from them, it becomes clear pretty quickly that Australian cinema has a storming record when it comes to documenting and refracting the many varieties of low life. From Bert Deling's *Pure Shit* (1977) to Dennis Nelthe m's *Angst* (2000), by way of *Going Down* (Haydn Keenen, 1983), *Dogs in Space* (Richard Lowenstein, 1987), and countless other features and shorts, Australian cinema has put a rough-hewn face to the collective fates of the young, the homeless, the socially outcast, the rebels, burn-outs and punks.

It may not be a history of Australian cinema that we are used to reading about in those official and respectable surveys that prefer literary adaptations, satirical comedies and all that solid work from the old school of Weir, Armstrong, Beresford and Schepisi – but our national grunge manifestations do constitute a significant and underrated contribution to world cinema.

Trainspotting

and getting dirty

Grunge comes from many places and has many precedents. Like everything, it has a tradition, a history – and what a fine, filthy history it is. Many generations of bohemians have had their grubby imaginations stoked by the low life visions of the poets Baudelaire and Pier Paolo Pasolini, novels including William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, Charles Bukowski *Women* and Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School*, the gutter-and-stars lyricism of Jean Vigo's 1930s films (*Zero de Conduite* and *L'Atalante*), Basquiat's painting, E. M. Cioran's philosophy of despair and decay, the early albums of Leonard Cohen or the golden era of punk music.

Even without these artistic and intellectual milestones no generation can be unfamiliar with the temptations of sensory excess, amoral detachment and unfettered experimentation that comprise this most totally attractive mode of cool. Grunge, after all, is the prerogative of youth. As Nick Cave sang, it is the duty of the old to find grace, and of the young to find disgrace. The grunge condition covers a multitude of sins: sex and drugs and playing in bands, angry alienated youth, high-spirited recklessness, twisted fantasies

Some grunge fictions are about nothing more scandalous than bong water and dirty dishes in a never touched, share-house sink.

of escape, anarchist politics, nihilist philosophy. Some grunge fictions are about nothing more scandalous than bong water and dirty dishes in a never touched, share-house sink – an ever popular topic with young adults, as the continuing life of John Birmingham's *He Died With a Falafel in His Hand* (first issue book, then a play, and later this year, a movie from Richard Lowenstein) makes abundantly clear.

Other grunge tales are much darker, scouring the David Lynch-like territory of sexual perversion, morbid death fantasies and addiction – equally popular material with audiences, as the movie of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* proved. Grunge beats a track that extends from the mildly grubby fun of yesteryear's TV cult *The Young Ones* or *Withnail & I* (why is British grunge so often twee?) to a backwoods American movie as enduringly intractable and disquieting as Harmony Korine's *Gummo* (1998), lodged somewhere between documentary freak show and art film poem.

Grunge fictions – especially in cinema – exploit a particularly intense experience of time. They exist in the eternal, suspended, heightened present tense – what cultural theorists like to call the liminal zone, a breathlessly drawn-out instant between the stained past and an unknowable future. Hence the popularity within the grunge genre of stories that happen in very tight time spans, such as the passage from dusk to dawn – usually with a party, a crime, or some all-night binge in between. This is the pattern used in *Going Down*, *Human Traffic* (1999) or Ian Pringle's *The Prisoner of St Petersburg* (1990), a more whimsical and

Love Serenade

Sample People

romantically inclined youth film starring our own grunge icon Noah Taylor

Along with this eternal present tense comes an equally passionate commitment to personal experience that sometimes borders on the solipsistic It is easy to find grunge an apolitical form since it so rarely gets outside of the immediate perceptions sensations and self justifications of its ragged heroes John Curran s screen version of *Praise* (1999) drew this criticism in some quarters – for ignoring certain painful realities of Queensland s underclasses (including its Indigenous community) and focusing solely on the doomed love affair of its main (white) characters – but this seems to me an excessively polemical argument to load upon such a finely wrought and affecting film

Grunge sometimes does try for a certain sidelong reflectiveness Occasionally a ringing prophet of doom – usually some battle-scarred fiend from an older generation – wanders into the frame for a moment for or two as in *Pure Shit* or *Head On* offering some broader historical perspective and social conscience prompt But it is all too easy for viewers to dismiss these luddy duddy ramblings in eager expectation of the next overdose beating getaway or sex scene Film more than any other medium glorifies the immediate and the visceral even if the main character on a bender is completely unlovable Just ask Martin Scorsese who has been depicting the catastrophe of the present moment according to this principle from *Who s That Knocking at my Door* (1968) to *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999)

A commitment to a first person present tense mode carries in-built aesthetic challenges Grunge films can too easily become monotonal and unvaried like Terry Gilliam s disastrous screen adaptation of Hunter S Thompson s *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* (1998) Or else they break down into a flurry of plotless twinkling disconnected fragments – one of the big problems with another Australian share house movie occurring in a fixed time period *Fresh Air* (1999) which tried in vain to mimic the look and style of a new-fangled zine Using a voice-over narration the least successful element of *Praise* s voyage from page to screen in McGahan s own script adaptation – often leads to a heavy handed underlining or spelling out of points and can actually detract from the desired effect of intimacy and immediacy

There is a social class dimension to the saga of grunge It has a lot to do with what some decadent French poets once charmingly referred to as *nostalgie de la boue* – literally a yearning for the mud For someone to want to yearn for the mud generally means that they were not born in the mud So the art fiction and music of grunge has for many decades recorded the adventures of middle class guys and gals who go forth and slum it in style the Nick Cave syndrome They de-class themselves going downwardly mobile They drop out of university They get smashed and take all the drugs they can They beg scam and steal for money They watch films soak up paintings and read weighty philosophical books voraciously – but in a carefree magpie fashion ripping off only those few words images or sounds needed to inspire and fuel their own art which is often conceived in a state of angry reaction or negation And they live in an amoral haze of promiscuous bisexual polymorphously perverse relationships – that is if they're really lucky

In the cinema of the 1980s and 1990s the films of French *enfant terrible* Leos Carax (*Boy Meets Girl*, *Bad Blood* *Les Amants du Pont-Neuf* *Pola X*)

And they live in an amoral haze of promiscuous, bisexual, polymorphously perverse relationships – that is, if they're really lucky.

Angst

indelibly capture the cool glamour of bohemian grunge right down to the last dirty fingernail. Has the grunge lifestyle as a full-blown existential choice – the only 'true', authentic path, as to go down and out, to eat with the bums, to find the strange shadow world hidden at night under bridges and amid back streets. Australian cinema has rarely gone this far into *amour fou* romanticism, except fleetingly, in Michael Rymer's *Angel Baby* (1995). Our movies are happier to embrace the grunge lifestyle as an accident, a trap or a necessity, sometimes just a phase in someone's life, at other times a curse, a time full of the pathos of dispossessed, socially marginalised souls, from Esben Storm's *27A* (1973), about alcoholism, to *Lilian's Story* (1996), about madness. Or else – as in much British cinema of bitter, kitchen-sink extraction – grunge seeps into the very fabric of mundane, quotidian life, and particularly into the mucky, body-fluid transactions of sexuality. This is an aspect of the Jane Campion legacy (evident from her early shorts) subsequently passed on to filmmakers including Monica Pellizzari (*Fistful of Flies*, 1996) and Shirley Barrett (*Love Serenade*, 1996): that droll tendency to present a character's sexual development as (in Ruth Watson's words) "more grubby than glamorous".

Grunge movies raise the unavoidable problem of cultural exactness in Australian cinema. If you presume to make a film about youth subcultures, about the bubbling *zeitgeist*, or about radical, shocking new forms of art and expression, you just have got the details right. The music that the characters listen to, the books they read, their culture-vulture patter, their speech idioms, the clothes they wear: all this has to be correct, or else a filmmaker's no doubt sincere, burning ambition to bear witness goes straight down the gurgler.

Now, for some reason that is hard to pinpoint, Australian films are notoriously bad on cultural exactness. From the embarrassing old rocker in *Back of Beyond* (1995) mumbling 'gotta go, gotta go' at every opportunity, to the instant punk stardom of the hero of *Bad Boy Bubby* (1994) screaming at mesmerised, zombified, [illegible] pub crowds, from the hilariously simple-minded philosophy lectures offered by a floundering Jimmy Smits in *Gross Misconduct* (1993) to the sight of Sam Neill as a literature professor in *My Mother Frank* (2000) banging on about 'subtext' as if his sole preparation for academic life was to read a bad how-to-write-a-screenplay manual, from the irredeemably foppish 'modern' artist with the immortal name of Cliff Ingersoll in *Duet For Four* (1982) to the drippy fashion sense of the attitude-stoked rave crowd in *Sample People* (2000) ... The record, I'm afraid, speaks for itself.

For some reason that is hard to pinpoint, Australian films are notoriously bad on cultural exactness.

Lilian's Story

The cultural exactness of *Angst* is what makes it so refreshing. The grunge factor in this film is fairly gentle, in contrast to *Two Hands* (1999), which took a more spectacular, Tarantino-type approach to the criminal milieu of Kings Cross. These characters, who treat the Cross as a diverting but still everyday place in which to live rather than as a mecca of mud yearning, are hooked on gruesome videos rather than any harder stuff. Their tastes are satisfyingly correct for a change: they discourse wisely upon the trashiest masterpieces of Cronenberg and Raimi, have a Dario Argento poster on their lounge room wall, and the video shop in which Dean (Sam Lewis) works proudly displays Australia's own *Body Melt* (Philip Brophy, 1994).

To spin the flip side of this argument, it is true that exactness of detail is not always an essential or even important ingredient in a film. *Fresh Air* got some of its inner-city incidentals exactly right – such as the arty Super 8 movies made by its protagonists, which distilled a portion of Sydney subculture in less than thirty seconds – but that didn't really help the movie overall. When I first saw *Dogs in Space* at the time of its release, I was disappointed, because I felt that Lowenstein had collapsed too many very different aspects of Melbourne's 'Little Bands' phenomenon into one cosy story – and then plonked Mr Mainstream Michael Hutchence right in the middle to play the hero!

Nowadays, detached from that particular historic moment of the Australian *avant garde*, I enjoy *Dogs In Space* for itself, not as a quasi-documentary but a vivid, romantic grunge fairy tale. Interestingly, abroad where the exactness issue did not figure, Armond White, in the American magazine *Film Comment*, rallied to the defence of *Dogs in Space*, twinning it with another extravagant grunge fable, Dominique Deruddere's Belgian adaptation of Bukowski, *Crazy Love* (aka *Love Is a Dog From Hell*, 1987). *Angst*, too, does not fixate on the truth of every single detail – the goth girl, May (Abi Tucker), is little more than someone who wears the right look and watches *The Crow* – but its breezy combo of low [illegible] and romantic comedy puts it well beyond such strictures.

Angst, like *Human Traffic*, signals a contemporary moment in cinema when tales of reckless youth eschew the presence of hard drugs, overly painful sex, naked social exploitation and numbing tragedy. Even the teen street urchin in Nettheim's film who steals the share house's beloved VCR turns out to be not so menacing or predatory after all – just a boy looking for a pal.

We seem very far from the initial shock of Larry Clark's sensationalist exposé *Kids* (1995).

But surely grunge will have its day again. It goes and returns in a never-ending cycle. In local theatre, the plays of Raimondo Cortese (such as *Features of Blown Youth*, a hothouse melodrama of postmodern good and evil) are inherently mixing the toughness of street talk and bad teen manners with a heightened, symbolic idiom reminiscent of Pier Paolo Pasolini. Haydn Keenan may yet hopefully make another film. On the film culture front, I recently received an email bulletin from the distinguished Melbourne scholar William Routt, hoping to edit and publish one, possibly two volumes on 'Australian trash cinema'. Everything is to be covered: "lost transgressive classics, no-budget shockers that never saw the light of a projector, ignored horror, action and soft-porn features from the 10BA days as well as before and beyond that neglected period, home-grown masterpieces that were (in Raymond Durgnat's memorable phrase) 'shot on a shoestring and blown up to Super 8'". Promises of contributions to Routt's project are, I believe, pouring in. And the working title of this much-needed magnum opus of critical literature? *Pure Shit*. ●

The Interview

Stephan Elliot director

On the eve of the local release of his fourth feature, Stephan Elliot tells **Michaela Boland** about his roller coaster career.

Sinéad Porter in *Welcome to Woop Woop*

The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert

Stephan

→Stephan Elliot is talking about his career. He will start at the beginning and roam across his four feature films, one by one. He'll even talk about the behind-the-scenes documentary *Killing Priscilla* directed by Lizzie Gardner during the making of Elliot's upcoming movie, *Eye of the Beholder*.

But first he wants to get one thing straight.

"I'm getting really pissed off with the comeback line from the documentary. People have seen the doco and they just want to bere the whole line on. He's had a failed career. It's his one big chance to come back and make it – all that crap, and it's really pissing me off now. I've made four movies. *Frauds* broke even. *Priscilla* made money. *Woop Woop* didn't. *Eye* made money. Now, because of that fucking documentary, I'm [copping] the failed career that everything was resting on, and it's really peeving me off. There, I've said it. I feel much better."

This savvy image Elliot. At 36, he's been in the movie business for almost 20 years. He loves a battle and speaks his mind, which renders him as a breath of fresh air blown from a self-censoring industry where everyone fears offending anyone lest they find themselves working together next week, despite the myriad jealousies and grudges everywhere under the surface.

"It's the nature of this industry that everybody's so cautious of offending anyone. Everything in the media is so controlled," Elliot says.

He cites press junkets, where distributors transport minibus loads of journalists into a hotel on for endless round-robin contrived press conferences and strictly supervised ten-minute one-on-ones with a key actor or the film's director, as forums for control.

"They're filled with lies," he says. And now distributors are beginning to treat loose cannon Elliot as a liability. "They don't like sitting me in a room with a journalist without a publicist but then when you do speak you mind you get massacred."

Elliot believes journalists lie in wait for him to crop clangers, which he inevitably does, but if there were a greater number of outspoken filmmakers his comments would receive less attention. "Which would be good," he says.

In an interview a few days later he'll turf a tabloid journo out of the room for trying to goad him into making comments which will get him in hot water. This journo has done it before – he hasn't forgotten her and, sure as shit, he's not going to be up to the second time.

Stephan Elliot was just 24 years old when he started directing his first feature, *Frauds*, a $5 million (A$) confused magic, crime thriller starring Hugo Weaving, Joseph Ne Byrnes and Phil Collins.

After entering the film industry straight from school, he had spent several years as an assistant editor and did a short stint at North Sydney Technical and had a handful of first AD (assistant director) credits as his belt.

He describes his early years in the industry as "that great 10BA period" when the industry was flourishing, even if the films being made were not so flash.

He praises director Bill Bennett. "Bill was really good because I'd worked with some hard directors who'd made bigger films and Bill was fabulous in re-teaching me how to make a low budget film." Working on *The Right Hand Man* (Dir. Drew, 1987), Elliot says, "really messed with his head."

Bennett, or "the other friend" taught me how to steal and how to do things without locations permits. That certainly became a much more fulfilling way to make a movie," and stood him in good stead for his current side-line project where he's director's friend" on Rebel Penfold-Russell's debut feature *Willfull*, which is being shot in and around Sydney during May and June.

Describing *Willfull* as "no budget movie making", Elliot recently wanted to shoot some footage around the Fox Studios. "But they wanted a $10,000 location fee, these are no budget movies. So we went down to a park and shot there because we don't have any money."

Frauds was eventually selected to screen in competition at Cannes but only after a period of bitter wrangling between Elliot and his investors, Cerelco.

On the first day of the shoot, he was instructed to request Joseph Ne Byrnes use an American accent and to give the film a happy ending. Then, upon completing the film, he ventured to LA seeking approval. Penniless without an agent or manager and carrying his director's cut, he met with Cerelco

Phil Collins in *Frauds*

Elliot

Ashley Judd in *Eye of the Beholder*

Ewan McGregor in *Eye of the Beholder*

Elliot directing k.d. lang in *Eye of the Beholder*

"They went into a huddle. [Then] walked out and said 'It's OK, we can save this.' and basically they tried me. Then they attacked the movie. The film that was finished as *Frauds* is an extremely damaged movie." Elliot then destroyed what remained of the negative. "I had to get rid of it. It was a horrible, lurking process. I was trial by fire on the first film and in the end I was close to a nervous breakdown. I had no support and these people were locking me out of the cutting room. They were pouring glasses of wine over my head. It got extremely ugly and by and-by I threw the towel in and said I'm never going to make another movie."

But it doesn't stop there. With this highly damaged movie I had to go to Cannes and do the whole smiley Cannes thing. It's really hard having to put up a brave face for a film you really don't believe in." Everything about that "film reeks damage to me," he says.

But producer Al Clerke had different plans for Elliot's future. He offered him the chance of complete creative freedom directing *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*.

"I had written *Priscilla* one evening when I was trying to get *Frauds* up. I had this dark, bizarre idea and I just churned it out." Elliot says of the box office behemoth starring Terence Stamp, Hugo Weaving and Guy Pearce as three drag queens who bicker their way across the Simpson Desert.

According to the Australian Film Commission's 1998 report, *Get the Picture*, *Priscilla* is the sixth-highest grossing Australian film of all time, after the *Crocodile Dundee* films, *Babe*, *Strictly Ballroom* and *The Man from Snowy River*.

Funded to the tune of $2.7 million through the Film Finance Corporation and Polygram, *Priscilla* earned $16 million, and more if CD sales, video distribution are included.

"It was trial by fire on the first film and in the end I was close to a nervous breakdown. I had no support and these people were locking me out of the cutting room. They were pouring glasses of wine over my head. It got extremely ugly."

But faced with extensive travel, a tiny budget and a 27-day shoot, Elliot's fragile confidence was rattled. "Even going into pre-production I was very nervous and wasn't sure whether I could do it, but there's that point where you cross the line and think, 'Oh fuck, I'm just gonna go for it.'

"We went hell for leather. I honestly expected the film to end up on video. I went in with no expectations, only a lot of wounds and then off it went, and it's still going on. I would like the fucking thing out now and shoot it. I've had enough of it already."

Much as he may loathe the fact, *Priscilla* made Elliot's name.

"Post *Priscilla* I got offered the world, absolutely everything that was being made. Five picture deals and three picture deals but after what I went through with *Frauds* I didn't trust any of them, not one." Elliot laughs dryly recalling "people walking around smiling saying, 'I'm so excited you've come to see us.' When I heard the words 'so excited,' I'm out the door. I had my ground and said, 'I don't want to go into this world.' I might be more comfortable but it's not why I wanted to make movies, but your head gets screwed. By the time I'd flown around the world and everything started going off, including Academy Awards and Golden Globes. You can't help but get funked up by that."

The result of getting fucked up can be seen on the big screen in *Welcome to Woop Woop*. Starring Susie Porter and Jonathan Schaech, *Woop Woop* is a bizarre, inflated tale of a New Yorker who finds himself in the Australian outback in the arms of a voracious sex kitten. It was a critical and financial

disester, with local distributors Roadshow screening it for two weeks on 96 screens, then cutting back to 35 screens in week three. It remained in cinemas for seven weeks in total.

Elliot refuses to apologise for *Woop Woop*. He says it will become a cult classic yet. "That is spreading now. I had [a] Gucci designer run up to me screaming in my face [that] he's doing the whole next summer's campaign based on *Woop Woop*. So it's going off in a really weird way.

"*Woop Woop* came from absolutely nowhere. *Eye of the Beholder* was what I wanted to do next. I had written it [but] I was dragged through every studio in town being offered all this money. Everyone was saying, 'What do you want to do?'"

Elliot, the brash song and dance director, would hand them a script for the dark surrealist thriller *Eye of the Beholder*. In short, nobody wanted to know about it.

After being handed the script for *Woop Woop* at a party, and signing on, the studio wouldn't let Elliot alter the film's plot. So instead, "I just put as many gags into it as I possibly could and then began to take it the John [Pecker] Waters route. I got completely outrageous towards the end. I was losing control but my attitude was that it was too dark."

Many of Elliot's gags were cut during editing but at least one memorable one remained. "Part my best cutaways? There was worse, oh much worse," Elliot smirks.

Now *Eye of the Beholder* is supposed to open in August safely pre-Olympics on approximately 100 screens. The behind-the-scenes shenanigans are well documented in *Killing Priscilla*. With hindsight he wouldn't have allowed the doco to be made but he adds that it could have been worse.

"It just gets down to that suddenly you've got this luscious career then, there you are again in your underpants and back we went again to no budget filmmaking."

Eye is Elliot's passion project. He gave it 200 percent of his energy and his own money, after being ripped off by financiers he describes as "crooks". He retained creative control and authorised the final cut but it's not the film he wanted to make. That film vanished when the money dried up.

"I did what I could under the circumstances." Which included doubling as every key grip in the film, including Ashley Judd.

"There's a shot in Chicago, we had no money by that stage. I was in a wig and a coat with an operator who was upside down in the doorway and couldn't reach the camera's on switch. I had to go to the other side of the camera, turn it on, walk into shot as Ashley walks out of shot and go and turn the camera off again." The shot made it into the film.

"It just gets down to that suddenly you've got this luscious career then, there you are again in your underpants and back we went again to no budget filmmaking."

Was the journey worth it?

"At the moment, no."

So will Elliot mellow?

"Inevitably with age, I guess you have to. You can't keep fighting. But I'm just a fighter and I fight and I fight. It's getting a little tiring. I need a box and a lie down." ●

The wogs have arrived

But it took some convincing

to market to market **robert slaviero**

→In my time as managing director of Fox Film Distribution I have been fortunate enough to be involved with some of the biggest films ever released in Australia including the highest grossing film of all time – *Titanic*.

One of the highlights of this time would also have to be *It's a Wog Boy*. With the film passing $11 million and breaking records along the way, this now sits at the Top 10 grossing Australian films of all time.

History will show what a great success story this whole venture was but at the time the financial experts in our industry were not convinced this project would get off the ground. When I first met the producer John Brousek and star/co-educator/writer Nick Giannopoulos I was amazed to learn how difficult it was for them to raise finance in Australia to produce the film.

After researching Nick's history I learned that his stage plays had grossed more than $24 million in addition to the success of his top rating TV sitcom *Acropolis Now* which ran for five years.

I'd heard that *The Wog Boy* had been secured by Beyond Films for theatrical distribution rights but this hadn't happened. Beyond's distribution arm folded shortly thereafter and GIO Films and Beyond were looking for a new distribution deal. With Fox having secured the video rights through managing director of home entertainment Steve Johnston it opened the door for us to start negotiations for theatrical distribution. I started negotiating for theatrical rights even before I saw the film, thinking even if it was a little, I thought it would have box office potential.

Thankfully what we got was a terrific Aussie comedy which turned out to be a total crowd pleaser.

John Brousek and Nick Giannopoulos handled little persuasion on the advantages of releasing the film through Fox. It was the start of a great relationship – I think it was a winning thing.

After a lengthy contract negotiation which lasted more than two months we were set to go and planned our release for February 24, 2000.

Our challenge was to create a campaign from a trench and where the film was treated as a major release. With Nick pursuing with friends on how the international should look and our own marketing team behind it we came up with a strong poster-presence and TV commercial. All simple but very efficient in concepts.

We knew we needed a big advertising spend to ensure awareness for the film in what would be a crowded market place. We were up against Oscar contenders and major releases such as *The Green Mile*, *American Beauty*, *Man On The Moon* and head-to-head with *The Talented Mr Ripley*. As we saw it, however, *The Wog Boy* was great counter-programming to these titles.

Our sales and marketing team did an extraordinary job on the film turning what was perceived as a little Aussie film into a blockbuster release. Not an easy task for any Australian film.

We had always planned advance paid previews the weekend before opening based on our belief that word-of-mouth was a key factor to its success. By the time the previews hit the film was on a roll and when it opened not only did the film compete, it KO'd everything in its path.

The weekend previews established themselves as the fifth largest previews weekend in Australian cinema history ($1,036,098) and word-of-mouth was excellent as expected. Opening on a record number of screens for a locally produced/funded film ($198) was the biggest opening weekend for an

conducted extensive interviews across Australia and to all forms of media but the major attraction was, of course, Nick who wooed the media and exhibition community into a frenzy creating event status for the film. His popularity in Australia is extraordinary and this was, I think, the key factor for the film's success. Nick G can now claim to have conquered the stage, small screen and film – a great achievement.

Everyone likes a winner, as they say, and once the film opened to huge box office the media were all over *The Wog Boy*, which then generated even more publicity for the film. This success and attention also proved to be a shot-in-the-arm to the Australian film community as a whole and should hopefully silence those who believe that Australian audiences don't want to see Australian films. Australian audiences don't want to see bad films – where they are produced makes little difference in my opinion.

Every wog has his day – wog is a fitting tag line for the film and I think it might even apply to some managing directors. ●

We were up against Oscar contenders and major releases such as *The Green Mile*, *American Beauty*, *Man On The Moon* and head-to-head with *The Talented Mr Ripley*. As we saw it, however, *The Wog Boy* was great counter-programming to these titles.

Australian film in history ($2,033,629) – breaking a 12-year-old record held by *Crocodile Dundee II*. Mick Dundee had been replaced by Zorba Dimeal. The film held the number one spot for two weeks, an all too rare achievement for any Australian release and proved to have a great box (literally of course).

Reviews for the film were interesting – a real mixed bag, but not unexpected given the film's commercial intent. At the end of the day, reviews proved to make little difference and audiences made up their own minds and flocked to the film. Word-of-mouth from cinemagoers on how enjoyable the film was – sealed the critics.

What would ultimately mean the difference for me with this campaign was the driving force of the publicity. Key cast and production people

Robert Slaviero has been managing director for Twentieth Century Fox Film Distributors Pty Ltd since 1 October 1996. He's spent 21 years in the film business.

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Tackle Happy: A diary

→If 1999 was **annus horribilus** for Mick Molloy, 2000 is fast shaping up as penis exetus.

Molloy, one half of the former commercial radio duo Martin Molloy and the subsequent anchor of *The Mick Molloy Show*, which enjoyed a spectacularly short season on late-night Channel 9 last year, and director and producer of *Tackle Happy*, Molloy's first feature-length home video. *Tackle Happy* tracks the trials and tribulations of the rind Australia road trip of performers Simon and Friendy, and their curious stage production *Puppetry of the Penis*.

Film critic Madeleine Swain may think *Tackle Happy* is a bit limp (see review p.42) but a bunch of sell-out houses at the 600-seat Capitol Theatre during the Melbourne Comedy Festival convinced Molloy *Tackle Happy* had legs.

The season was extended but then cancelled because props for another comedy festival show, which had moved into the theatre, proved too expensive for Molloy's company to work around.

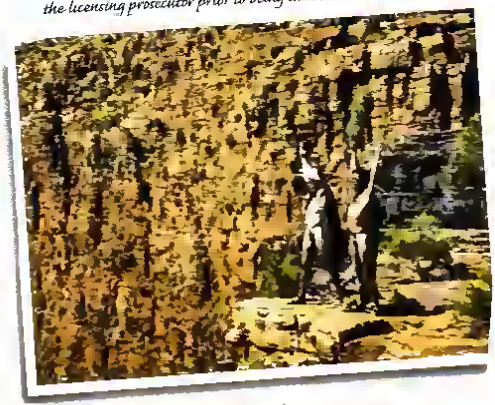
After a fruitless attempt to gain entry to the Sydney Film Festival (the reason given was that *Tackle Happy* had already enjoyed a theatrical release), sessions at Melbourne's Longford and Nova cinemas and Sydney's Valhalla cinema were arranged.

So on May 4, 2000, *Tackle Happy* opened head-to-head with Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*. Screening four sessions each day, it earned $7000 on opening weekend. Ahem, the almighty *Gladiator* earned $7,817,000 in opening week.

A tour of other capital cities is planned. **Michaela Boland**

"The Cops in Sydney Deem as Offensive" Simon on the phone to the licensing prosecutor prior to being shut down in Newcastle

"All Hail..." Simon and Friendy on the road make a necessary pit stop to pay tribute



"Catching an all over tan at El Questro" A vast outback cattle station in The Kimberleys that provided the venue for one of only three shows between Cairns and Perth

"Not Sure What to do with a Pole! On Stage at Sensations in Darwin" The sign on the door to the club read 'No Lude (sic) Behaviour... No You Can't Flop That Out Here'

Tackle Happy opened head-to-head with Ridley Scott's *Gladiator*. Screening four sessions each day, it earned $7000 on opening weekend. Ahem, the almighty *Gladiator* earned $7,817,000 in opening week. A tour of other capital cities is planned.

"An Instant Hangover Cure!"
There is nothing you can't do in the nude... scuba diving was on the agenda for that afternoon

"Ah The Kombi - Our African Queen"
Worried that the Kombi would not even make it to Sydney for the first season of shows, it ended up taking the tour around the big brown land before finally dying outside Perth.

STOP

1999 16mm colour 7min

Director Anthony Mullins
Writer/ Producers Kier Shorey, David Megarrity, Anthony Mullins
Director of Photography Dan Macarthur
Production Company Collide Up
Funded by PFTC
Key cast David Megarrity

snapshot **olivia rousset**

→A year ago it **helped** my flat mate Mark Cameron spread thousands of dollars worth of borrowed designer clothes on our apartment floor. My job was to help her decide what to take to Cannes and what to leave behind for me to wear inappropriately and wear whenever possible. He graduate short film from AFTRS, *Milk* – was the only Australian film accepted into official competition at Cannes.

Well dressed but short of spending money she left for France. At the very least she was bound to return with a few more names to put on her fortnightly date form.

"In some ways Cannes was everything I expected it to be: red carpet, tacky palm trees and glitzy frocks. It's the Gold Coast of Europe," she noted afterwards. "But it does somehow feel like the real thing very temporarily. Then you come home and go back on the dole."

Despite the hype and the quantum leap from short filmmaking in Australia to competition at Cannes there are real gains to be made, as Cameron to and not.

"With a film in competition doors open. Everyone is looking for new talent, so until you prove to them that you are a pompitty idiot they want to see your film, meet you and be the first one to sign you up."

Cameron returned home with investors seriously interested in her directing a feature, yet not much has come of it since but she isn't too concerned. "They're people that will now open the door to us – it's about relationships."

The same opportunity this year goes to a group of Brisbane filmmakers with their short film *Stop* – again in the only Australian film to be selected for official competition at Cannes. Paycheck-to-paycheck kind of people they are having wardrobe problems of their own, but not without a solution.

"We're going on *A Current Affair*, we're a four minute slow news story. We're trying to get sponsorship for suits and stuff like that," says actor and co-writer/producer David Megarrity.

Alleged around 30, Megarrity, Kier Shorey and Anthony Mullins work as a writing and producing co-operative. Mullins directs. With only one media studies degree between them, this is their third short film.

Megarrity has appeared in eight of the films. "This is the first film we actually rehearsed and, strictly speaking, we devise the actor together," he says.

"It's an interesting way to work because funding bodies don't seem up to dealing with dare I say it, collectives. They are quite direction focused. Nonetheless Megarrity and Shorey are fighting their way to Cannes and justifiably so as they have a feature to pitch. It's called *Distant Sun* and is sort of autobiographical – about a guy in a band," says Megarrity who first met Mullins playing in a band when they were in their early 20s.

Megarrity was surprised to hear of their official selection in the world's premier film showcase event. "When we got the call we thought it was a prank. I liked *Stop* but I didn't think it was that good," he confesses.

Stop is a trash out of water comedy about a man and a surreal traffic light in the classically Australian middle-of-nowhere. The trash is a quintessential loser who typically he thinks he's got it all going on. A lemon tie wearing mobile phone wielding Commodore driving young businessman, he's late for a meeting. He pops in a mediation tape into the car stereo to wind down and stops at a light with no purpose. What ensues is a silly comedy of errors – a man's mind common sense up against the nonsensical.

"It was Kier's original idea. You have to do a lot of driving in Australia and you often come across those portable traffic lights – we just thought it was a cute idea. We were trying to do a gag film but also with a layered story," explains Megarrity.

Stop is more than a gag film, but the message isn't very clear, but it's table about man against machine?

Megarrity clarifies it has several themes, one being a pastiche of new age thinking. "The character has to shed certain things before he can get to where he needs to go. Like his reliance on technology."

The traffic light becomes the enemy in his battle to maintain balance and somehow when changing from green to red it sends everything awry – the car, the mobile phone and the man all break down.

This is a highlight, playing a suburban man pushed to the edge with vigour. Megarrity ends up wrapped around the offending traffic light beating it with his shoe. In this moment director Anthony Mullins takes us inside, then deftly outside, this man's ridiculous frustration. While it is a gently funny film it is let down by one gag too many.

Stop seems an odd choice for Cannes. It's not bitter or hysterically funny. However, the filmmakers have a strong understanding of film language and the funny moments do have originality. Perhaps the French selectors warmed to its sheer ridiculousness and the clichéd Australianess of the landscape (necessary when your location requires a middle of nowhere).

Whether they win or not, doors are now open.

Cameron's advice to the crew: "Just make the most of it, enjoy it. It's a little bit of glory when you've worked really hard to make a film." And on the fashion front? "They should just buy op shop suits. As long as they have a bow tie they can walk up the red carpet. You're allowed to be a bit eccentric, be the boy with a hole in his suit, they'll love that. Oh, it's the crazy arty types they'll whisper knowingly." ●

David Megarrity in a scene from *Stop*

"When we got the call we thought it was a prank. I liked *Stop* but I didn't think it was that good," he confesses.

reviews **film.**

chopper

Director
Andrew Dominik
Cast
Eric Bana as Chopper Read, Simon Lyndon, Vince Colosimo, Kate Beahan, Daniel Wyllie, David Field, Kym Gyngell
Executive Producers
Arthur Dark, Jim Michael Coulter
Producer
Michelle Bennett
Distributor
[illegible]
Country of origin
Australia
Rating
TBA
Duration
[illegible] mins

below: Eric Bana as Chopper & Kate Beahan as Tanya.

→First time screenwriter and director Andrew Dominik has done an excellent job in taking us back to the house hard days of the 1970s and 1980s in Melbourne. Back then Pentridge Jail housed some of the most tearaway crooks in its notorious 'H' for 'Hell' Division. Murders, savage beatings, fires, nightsticks, stabbings and hostage stand-offs were commonplace. Chopper Read emerged through all of that as a key figure. Leading the famous Overcoat Gang which terrorised prisoners. And once you were out of the nuk, some of the places around town weren't too much better. Chopper, of course, knew those places, frequented them and in the criminal sense fed off them.

They did pack grams at places like Bojangles nightclub in those days. Now it's more likely to be a pouch of ecstasy.

The Great Bookie Robbery, carried out in the old Victoria Club in April 1976, made sure an underworld war existed in Melbourne for nearly a decade. Those involved in the multi-million dollar raid were continually looking over their shoulders for those who weren't involved, but also wanted a slice of the take.

It was in this climate of distrust that Chopper was able to operate as a standover man.

Some of Melbourne's best crooks didn't know who to trust and Read was simply a loose cannon.

In *Chopper*, the filmmakers have altered history slightly with their screen presentation of the life and times of Chopper Read. The most important thing they've captured, through the fine performance of Eric Bana, is the ultimate enigma of the man.

Read should be regarded as a loathsome low-life criminal, yet the way he tells his story, both in his prolific selling books and now on the big screen, the ordinary punter on the street can't help empathising with him. At least partly.

The attraction with Chopper is that he takes us into this scary, dangerous pathetic underworld from the safety of our armchairs. People then regard Read's stories as a great insight into the underworld or just pure fantasy. Many simply can't make up their mind. So what if his facts aren't altogether right? For as Chopper says of himself, you can't let facts ruin a good yarn.

Chopper feels it's true without necessarily being accurate.

What also makes Chopper different is here we have a crook who puts his hand up and says, 'Yes, I am a nasty criminal. I have shot people, untied people, done heinous things to them and then seeks to justify it all.'

We're supposed to cheer because the only people he ever hurts are rotten drug-pushing scum or simply nasty criminals, not unlike himself.

Read was a police informer which allowed him more freedom than most criminals. This is highlighted in the film when Chopper makes monkeys out of the welfare detective he was dealing with. They turn a blind eye to a lot of his antics in the hope of getting good information from him.

For example, Read's flashing of his extended member did take place in a fashion in the Sun & Yarra hotel while he was in the company of police, as depicted in the film. While that stunt was relatively harmless, Read's shooting of 'Sammy the Turk' left police with a moral dilemma. Like everyone else who had dealt with Read, even the coppers found him too dangerous.

Which leads me to applaud another the effect the film has reproduced from the Chopper books: at every time you find yourself starting to sympathise with Read, he does something which totally repulses you.

That's the enigma of the man. We all know that Australians are full of innocent men. No one ever did the time.

Not so with Chopper.

I recall bumping into George Washington Day. Read would not only say that he chopped down the cherry tree, but that he bundled up the branches and sold them as firewood, and then hiffed the copper who came along to arrest him.

The humour is rawer, make no mistake, this film is not for those with queasy tummies. And however grossly it depicts Read's life, the real life exploits are even worse. But this is as close as many of the audience will get to see the Melbourne underworld warts and all.

It's a great insight into the dynamics at work in the city's underbelly, where life is cheap and a crook's death sentence is likely to be handed out by a smiling mate. Unless the target is Chopper of course, because he always gets in first.

The Chopper Read faithful will enjoy this film. ★

Jim Tennison is managing director of Media Relations Pty Ltd. He was a senior crime reporter with the Melbourne *Sun* during the 1970s and 1980s.

Eric Bana as Chopper

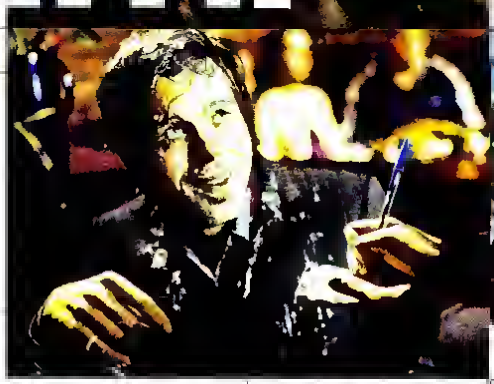
below: Eric Bana as Chopper & Kate Beahan as Tanya
Vince Colosimo as Neville Bartos
Simon Lydon as Jimmy Loughnan. Eric Bana as Chopper and Dan Wylie as Bluey

film.

above: Ala Tucker as goth girl May

Angst

Director
Daniel Nettheim
Producer
Jonathan Finlay
Writer
Anthony O'Connor
Cinematographer
Tristan Milani
Country of Origin
Australia
Distribution
UIP
Cast
Sam Lewis, Jessica Napier, Justin Smith, Ala Tucker, Luke Lennel



above: Jessica Napier as Jade
left: Justin Smith as Ian

→It appears the masculine rights of passage theme will never find itself coming of age. Rather, it has an alternative device as rights of passage have continued to provide audiences with a range of eternally youthful archetypes (Jimmy Dean, Holden Caulfield and the whole cast of *The Outsiders*) that lend themselves up in opposition to the mainstream. In fact, it is precisely the conflict implicit in such a youthful opposition that makes these boys interesting in the first place.

With impressive films such as *Flirting* and *The Year My Voice Broke* representing a tendar albeit provincial experience for its male protagonists, Australian cinema has had its fair share of coming of age stories. However, as the idea of a new generation slowly washes in, it brings with it a renewed framework for viewing the modern condition. Daniel Nettheim's directorial angst has managed to produce a feature-length of the same name. According to the Oxford dictionary, angst refers to the feeling or outlook of dread. The film exploras this outlook, though it a confusion faced by early twentysomethings living and growing up in inner city Kings Cross. Grubby with grunge songs and post-modern references to C-grade horror flicks, *Angst* doesn't really push any envelopes. Taking the art-house lifestyle trope quite to extreme, *Angst* traverses a fine line between cliche and humour. A young man is working in an inner city video store. In between making harassing phone calls to late returners, the young video addicts deal with up-thy-nose liners for his first feature – so far familiar? Well, then you won't be surprised to discover that the 23-year-old *Angst* screenwriter, Anthony O'Connor, did in fact work in Kings Cross video store while he was writing a screenplay about a young man who works in a Kings Cross video store. Add to this premise a shared house, a westie, a street kid and some stolen toys, and you pretty much have the whole picture.

The video boy, Dean, is played with considerable post-adolescent charm by Sam Lewis. Jessica Napier's Jade is effectively frustrating as the indolent and justifiably unemployed ex-girlfriend cum flatmate. Ultimately, it is the confident direction of the ensemble cast combined with Tristan Milani's cinematography that makes this film less of an ordeal than its name would suggest.

• **Emma Crimmings**

Tackle Happy

Director/Producer
Mick Molloy
Cast
Simon Morley, David Friend, Steve Ocuny
Country of Origin
Australia
Running Time
74 mins

→One would be tempted to make the immediate observation that, like the protagonists in this documentary, a little goes a very long way. Except that the chaps with the malleable members are not exactly working with little anything. *Tackle Happy* is an on the road behind the scenes look at two chaps who like to tour the country wearing nothing but gold lamé capes and silly hats, performing their theatrical extravaganza *Puppetry of the Penis*. Simon Morley and David Friend possess the unavoidable (by most, one would hope) ability to conjure visual tricks with their genitals. Think shadow puppets. Without the light source. Or fingers.

While undoubtedly a thrilling experience for the curious audiences who witness them in the art, flesh, do that Pulitzer and the fly-on-the-wall accompanying material make for scintillating cinema? In a word, no. This is tedious, repetitive stuff. There are a few moments of interest – Morley's overnight person date springs to mind – and most mouths will be agape at the sight of such tricks as "the pet can" or "the wristwatch", but the laughs quickly dry up. A 10-minute gag on *Funniest On Tour Videos* might have been amusing – but a 70-plus minute feature? I'd rather play with myself.

• **Madeleine Swain**

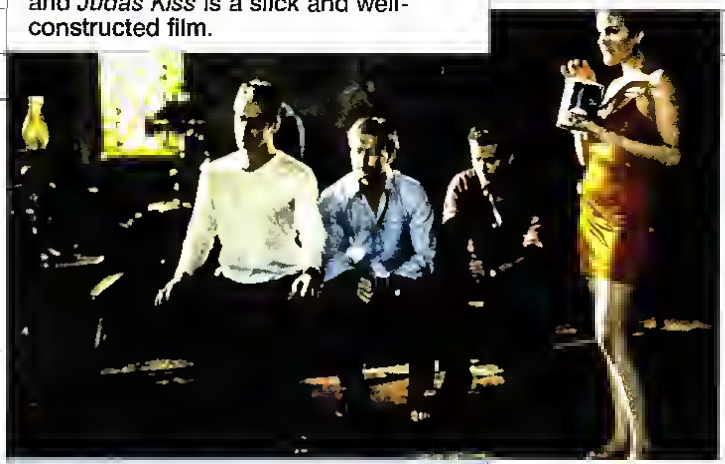
Judas Kiss

Director
Sebastián Gutierrez
Cast
Emma Thompson, Alan Rickman, Gil Bellows, Carla Gugino, Simon Baker Denny, Greg Wise, Til Schweiger, Philip Baker Hall, Roscoe Lee Browne, Hal Holbrook, Lisa Eichhorn, Joey Slotnick
Producers
Beau Flynn, Steven Simchowitz, Jonathan King
Distributor
Palace
Country of origin
US
Rating
MA
Duration
[illegible]

→The question on many people's minds will be can *Judas Kiss* do for Simon Baker-Denny what *LA Confidential* did for his fellow Australian expat actors Russell Crowe and Guy Pearce? Baker-Denny of course had a brief taste of the limelight in the same film, but his mesmerising-medest contribution was entirely overshadowed by the impressive heepower of the other two. The answer is probably not. For although Baker-Denny provides a more than serviceable performance here, and *Judas Kiss* is a slick and well-constructed film, above all it is an efficient genre piece. And that's about as far as it goes.

First, banish all thoughts of Oscar. Who from your mind. Sebastian Gutierrez's film has nothing whatsoever to do with David Hare's similarly entitled recent play. This instead is your standard hot-shot drama, although as writer/director Gutierrez, generously has Detective David Friedman (Alan Rickman) tell us at one point, nothing is what it seems. There's the rub. It must be terribly difficult to actually make a simple genre picture these days. It has become almost de rigueur to tip your hat to all your predecessors. You can't just make a straightforward horror movie – it has to be self-referential to the point of no return like *Scream 3*. It's not enough that *Judas Kiss* reminds the viewers of a thousand 40s film noirs, it must also include smart-mouthed dialogue in the registration post-Tarantino fashion and reference Jim Thompson from time to time (hence the Rickman line above). Gutierrez avoids shooting himself in the foot, though, by keeping his twists and turns coming with admirable fluidity and by his refusal to give in to the frenetic pacing directors often feel is necessary – he even manages a novel spin on the car chase scene. *Judas Kiss* is nothing if not stylish and the cinematography is full of subtle pleasures, particularly in the very noir reaches of the frame. The film follows the fortunes of a group of low-life (naturally) fortune hunters who formulate a plan to kidnap the billionaire boss of a computer company. Of course things do not go according to plan.

Where *Judas Kiss* differs from *The Underneath* or the myriad other cleverly plotted heist flicks of recent times is that we see the scenario



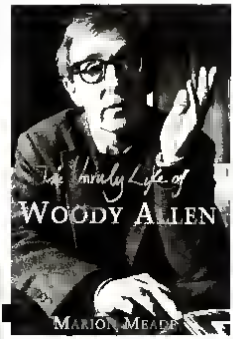
above: Gail Bellows as Lizard Browning, Simon Baker-Denny as Junior Armstrong, Til Schweiger as Reben Rebenhauer & Carla Gugino as Coco Chavez
left: Simon Baker-Denny as Junior Armstrong

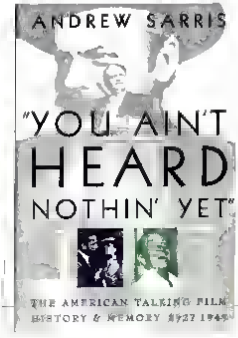
entirely through the point of view of a female protagonist. But Coco Chavez (Carla Gugino) is no devil's woman Barbara Stanwyck or Linda Fiorentino type of femme fatale, nor is she the girl next door, and she is all the more interesting because of it. The up-and-coming Gugino gives her the works: steamy, sassy and smart. Baker-Denny plays her lover Junior, doing an with admirable edge – and Gil Bellows from TV's *Ally McBeal* is cool enough to freeze meat as the brains of the kidnapping gang.

The only really false note I can hear in the ambitious casting of Rickman and Emma Thompson. Two of England's finest Shakespearean thespians, hard-boiled American cops? They both give it their all (as one would expect) but their performances are just too self-consciously studied.

• **Madeleine Swain**

reading





→**The charming** thing about the movies is that not nothing is definitive. Film appreciation is always subjective, except in the case of Adam Sandler movies.

Andrew Sarris's ***You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet: The American Talking Film: History and Memory, 1927-1949*** (Oxford University Press $35 paperback, $69.95 hardcover) is every bit as ambitious as its title, almost definitive in its history and fabulously subjective in its memory.

Sarris, the well-established commentator for New York magazine *The Village Voice*, possesses a student's knowledge, a fan's love and a journalist's gout. These three attributes don't often find themselves in such a readable writer.

Sarris has assembled a withering number of essays in this volume. Some, such as those included in the chapter "The Hollywood Studios," are modeled on brief and license these serve to distract him from the material he really wants to explore: the actors, directors, the creatives. Each exploration overflows with decades of passion, an experience that he resistant to derivative mixed art and feeling means this could never be a critical history, which it not such a bedtime read. It makes it so dynamic.

You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet doesn't quite reach the heights of his seminal work *American Cinema*, but Sarris shows again that he's flying in a higher atmosphere than most film writers. Conversely, Marion Meade, the author of ***The Unruly Life of Woody Allen*** (Weidenfeld & Nicholson $45), is a biographer who sure knows how to plumb the depths. The latest in the dirty-laundry of one of cinema's finest directors, it's a shame we've the last Meade attacks her subject with all the anthropological fervour of her namesake, Margaret (so what's she dropped the "e" between friends?), but delivers an unauthorised biography as salacious and unnecessary as one by Kitty Kelley.

Yes, Marion, we know Woody is a manipulative, arcane, slightly creepy and sarcastic. And we know today's blogger-elites must take on the false fiction of actually being there. But we also know you wouldn't have a book contract if you came to praise him. And you only concentrate on his sins because he's a talent and you have a warped sense of karma.

That's why I regret proroguing my hours reading the admittedly well-researched trash. Karma stung me. I'll have to pay one day for my sins, but on which your sordid sweat? Besides, my time would have been better spent listening to Allen's standup or watching *Zelig*.

John Irving's ***My Movie Business*** (Bloomsbury RRP$29.95) makes two major assumptions. The first is that you have already read the book or seen the film of *The Cider House Rules*. The even bigger assumption is that you stayed awake during it and care to entertain further discussion on it.

If you do, this slim book's little promise is something that isn't there. It's a rambling, self-congratulatory look at Irving's own work, his grandfather, his ancestors and an abortion and the filming of the film's screenplay. Minimax to be fair to the book. It rarely touches on trivia. Irving's movie-history, other than Lasse Hallström's version of *Cider House*, *Hotel New Hampshire* (which was a brilliant screenplay) and Robin Williams (and the much-body-horror-to-play the teenager in *The World According to Garp*).

Irving is not a particularly thoughtful chap and he admits he's only seen two films in a cinema in ten years. That's comforting.

So when Irving admits directors Wayne Wang and Michael Winterbottom were attached to direct *The Cider House Rules* before Scott Hicks, mentioning Lasse Hallström, you will be completely bewildered and miss a finer, more interesting film that would have benefited from Oscar. The latest BFI Modern Film Classic, ***Taxi Driver*** (British publishing $19.95) by Amy Taubin, another writer for *The Village Voice*, tackles something that could never be over-analysed: a Martin Scorsese film. Yet somehow it comes up short, in both length and breadth.

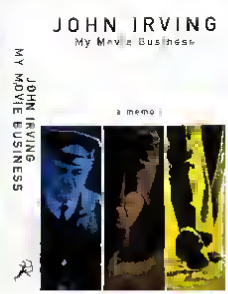
It helps to have the even-available thoughts of Scorsese and screenwriter Paul Schrader on hand, but this Modern Classic's tone is exploratory or fulfilling as a number of recent editions.

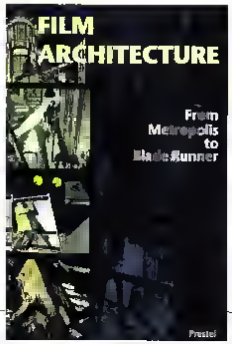
Jonathan Dawson's ***Screenwriting—A Manual*** (Oxford University Press $29.95) is rather self-exploratory. It's about as necessary as new, larger popcorn bucket.

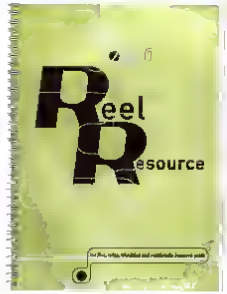
One thing in its favour: it is Australian, but the writer's credentials are noticeably thin and lacking in industry experience (he's Associate Professor of Film, Media and Cultural Studies at Griffith University). And who's to say any Australian screenwriter would or should assume the role of teacher anyway?

Dawson mainly matches ideas from previous manuals (he quotes William Goldman nearly without ironically copying them. He also liberally drops his own wordsmithy wacky catchphrase method! (the "cat rock method"? "the telephone booth"?) and snippets of practical knowledge. There are some handy notes on styles and structure, but nothing revolutionary beyond two quite novel notions. The first, that writers consider screenwriting from the marketing point of view is most unAustralian. The second, that you start with a great idea and the rest will follow, is pure bunkum. It's breezy and accessible but if you are the type who needs a manual to write a personal, individual screenplay, you shouldn't be writing a screenplay.

Don't even attempt to use Paul Thomas Anderson's ***Magnolia: The Shooting Script*** (Bloomsbury $35) as a teaching aid. It will scare you witless. Anderson is a rare talent allowed by a studio (New Line Cinema) searching for their next auteur to get away with wordy, dense dialogue. Few others have that luxury, particularly any 30







year olds. This shooting scripts just that: a photocopy of Anderson's work with typos, lashings of dialogue and descriptions and the scenes that didn't make it to the final cut. Interestingly, they include a couple featuring Tom Cruise's character. Presumably Bloomsbury aims to cash in on the market that previously made do with A4 photocopies or devious screenplay re-writes from the finished movie. But attempts to add value to this screenplay, including a pedestrian interview with Anderson and photos from the set, don't add much. The value is in the writing, and in that regard, Anderson is perhaps one to savour rather than learn from or mimic.

Once you've digested all the screenplay tips from those two books, it's time to make the thing. And if you're in Victoria, ***Reel Resource 2000*** (ATOM $29.50 $5 postage) will help you no end.

Billed as a film, video, television and multimedia resource guide, this handy, coil-bound guide has a terrific number of tips, glossaries, checklists, contacts, contracts and forms.

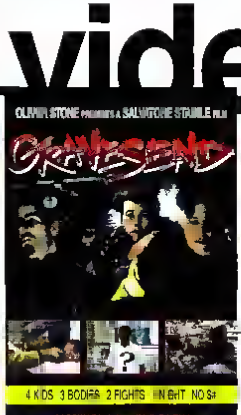
Some of the contact listings aren't definitive and some tips are charming in their commercial naivete (eg, select a distributor or you can market and distribute your film or video yourself!) but it remains a comprehensive and worthwhile resource.

Film Architecture: From Metropolis to Blade Runner (Prestel, $65) is pitched to a specialised market. And this beautiful large format book's cover doesn't quite tell the whole story. It's the catalogue for an exhibition staged in the US and Germany. The subjects are films featuring cityscapes from the future, near or far. Beginning with the films of Weimar Germany of the 1920s (but only two F.W. Murnau selections) moving through to two Jacques Tati films (which he also designed) and *Blade Runner*, *Batman* and *Dick Tracy*, the catalogue focuses on a disparate bunch of films loosely bundled up as expressionistic cinema. In attempting to elevate set design as an equal player in the creative partnership it aims high. That aim is too niche for a broad market.

Despite some splendid photos, preliminary sketches and visual contextualisation, the accompanying essays are too dry and academic for the casual reader. It would look nice on your coffee table. Just hope your guests don't query you about the text. ●

• **Michael Bodey**

video.



Title Gravesend
Director Salvatore Stabile
Cast Tony Curtis, Michael Madsen, Tom Malloy, Tim Roth
Executive Producers Tom Ross, Mark Ross, Grace Edelman
Distributor Lion Entertainment
Country of origin US
Rating Mature/Drama, 85 mins

→The background story of *Gravesend* is the sort that Hollywood loves. A $5000 short film made prompted 19-year-old Salvatore (Sal) Stabile to drop out of film school and just do it – expand his short film into a micro-budget feature. The outlaw production was shot in the middle of the night, tapping into city power lines for lighting. Catered by Stabile's girlfriend, the numerous last-light scenes in the script, organically developed into reel ones. Finally a rough cut was presented at the Hampton's Film Festival, where Stabile acquired the services of a top notch agency and $40,000 for post production. Now he has a two-picture deal with Spielberg's company, Dreamworks SKG.

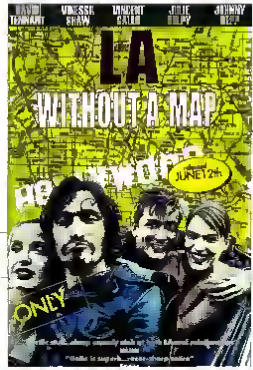
The humble budget is obvious, of course, but this lends a covert feel, well-suited to the rough, prosaic dialogue. It's a scrappy film in both senses of the word – the four friends who follow through a fateful Saturday night in Gravesend, Brooklyn, are unable to go 10 minutes without clobbering each other or someone nearby, and it's this pervasive sense of simmering conflict that gives the film much of its energy. Certainly there are hints of influence from the likes of Scorsese and Tarantino, but there is enough promise here to make Stabile a name to watch.

Title Cirque du Soleil: Quidam
Director David Moffat, Guy Cloves, 50 performers
Producer Rodney Gibbons
Distributor Columbia TriStar
Country of origin Canada
Rating G/Drama, 90 mins

→Since its foundation in Quebec in 1984, Cirque du Soleil has performed a dozen different shows to 23 million patrons in 20 cities, including a highly successful Australian run of *Saltimbanco* in 1999. Now they want to be everywhere at once, so they've set up Cirque du Soleil Images, the wing of the company that has produced this video from the European leg of their *Quidam* tour (as well as an IMAX film, *Journey of Man*).

The obvious question is how can a video capture the full sensory experience of a live circus performance? The short answer is it can't, but the imaginative use of 15 cameras and lighting incisively designed for filming makes the most of a tough job. The footage also brings home the reality behind the spontaneity – the sweat, the vulnerability of sweating, pulling individuals, not just a bank of performing limbs, going through the motions.

Some will find the narrative thread pretty corny when it's not just plain obscure. Those with a "astonishing magic and wonder" in the entertainment may have a better time of it. Of course there are dazzling physical performances, but it's all wrapped up in a rather dizzy package. This ones really for existing fans of the Cirque's work.



Title LA Without a Map
Director Mike Newell
Cast David Tennant, Vanessa Shaw, Vincent Cassel, Julie Delpy
Executive Producer Deepak Nayar
Distributor Screen Entertainment
Country of origin UK/US/France
Rating M/Romantic comedy, 90 mins

→A new English language venture from the Irish brothers Kario (Mike) and Aki have directed some 20 films each. *LA Without a Map*, which was nominated at the Melbourne International Film Festival in 1999, invests two familiar territories: Hollywood-bashing and the tumbling British road. The screenplay, adapted from the book by Richard Reyner, follows the misadventures of Richard (David Tennant), a young undertaker in a small English town who is smitten with a visiting California actress/waitress Barbara (Vanessa Shaw). Nothing ever has the let town then he finds himself on a pare for Los Angeles, track her down.

This is an amiable comedy with plenty of odd bags and peculiar cameos to pass the time. Johnny Depp even gets to replay his *Dead Man* role in the movie's coda. Vincent Gallo and Julie Delpy also appear as a pair of goitless airheads, which, in every body else in the film maintains a snowball's career, slowly on a means of getting laid. The novel's possible message about LA's vacuity is summed up well by James Le Gros, wildly caricatured screenwriting agent Tokowsky: "I'm loud, I'm boisterous, I'm VERY well-known. Talk to me!" It's a film better suited to the video marketplace.

Title The Last Yellow
Director Julian Farino
Cast Mike Addy, Charlie Creed-Miles, James Hooton, Samantha Morton
Producer Nick Powell
Distributor Screen Entertainment
Country of origin England
Rating M/Drama, 96 mins

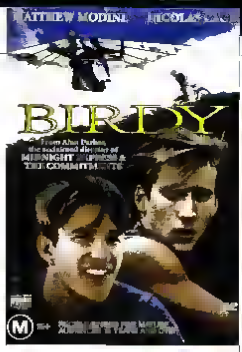
→*The Full Monty*'s Mark Addy (with a magnificent mullet) puts in a touching performance as thirty-something loser Frank, who returns home from a day at the pub to find himself locked out by his cranky Mum. He moves into shabby lodgings with the equally cranky Len (Kenneth Cranham) and his two sons: slightly deft Kenny (Charlie Creed-Miles) and severely disabled Keith (James Hooton). It's not too long before Frank and Kenny are on a bus to London with a loaded gun and a double homicide on their minds.

First-time director Julian Farino seems to be entering for Mike Leigh territory: a small ensemble of broadly drawn characters in dingy surrounds, struggling with imperfect lives. However, Farino lacks Leigh's talent for injecting hope into the gloom. It's not difficult to see why this has gone straight to video: too gooey to call a drama, too grim to work as comedy. It seems intent to leave viewers unsatisfied either way.

Farino's apparent desire to create both a black comedy and a frank study of love, loneliness and violence makes the film pretty rough going. There are moments of real warmth, and Adrian Johnston's jaunty jazzy score does much to lighten the mood, but this bitterly sad story ultimately proves too much to overcome.

• Video reviews by Alistair Shaw

DVD.



Title Birdy **Director** Alan Parker **Cast** Nicolas Cage, Matthew Modine **Producer** Alan Marshall **Distributor** Columbia Tristar Pictures **Country of Origin** US **Rating** M **Duration** 110 minutes **Price** $49

→*Birdy* (released in 1984) is the story of two young men, Birdy (Matthew Modine) and Al (Nicolas Cage), who form a long lasting friendship which develops through 1950s Philadelphia, the horrors they face in the Korean War and Birdy's therapy.

Given the recent spate of films concentrating on the psychological effects of war (*Thin Red Line*, *Saving Private Ryan*), Birdy stands up quite well. Although slow in parts, the strong direction of Alan Parker (*Mississippi Burning*, *Midnight Express*), a faultless performance by Nicolas Cage – who plays the less crazy Al to Modine's off the wall Birdy – and an interesting script make for a worthwhile watch. Unfortunately, other than realistic picture quality, the DVD version provides little else. The special features section includes a breakdown of the 26 scenes so that you can watch each individually – which may appeal to students and fans of the film. It also includes the trailer (like point being?) and a short text format filmography of Nicolas Cage, Matthew Modine and Alan Parker.

The inclusion of current interviews with Cage and Parker looking back on *Birdy* would have proved most interesting given the careers that both Cage and Parker have forged for themselves since making the film. However, the inclusion of everything interesting or thought provoking within the special features section doesn't appear to have fitted into the budget.

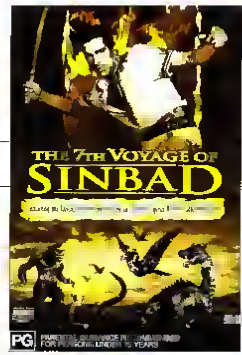
Unless you're a huge fan and have a much-loved video of *Birdy* that is completely worn out and desire the long-lasting picture quality of the DVD, save yourself the dirty bucks and hire it for a week from the local video store for $3. • **Shane Stephens**

Title Blue Streak **Director** Les Mayfield **Cast** Martin Lawrence, Luke Wilson, Dave Chappelle **Producer** Neil Moritz **Distributor** Columbia Tristar Pictures **Country of Origin** US **Rating** M **Duration** 91 minutes **Price** $40

→**The premise for this so called comedy** starring *Bad Boys* Martin Lawrence is starkly simple. Lawrence is a master jewel thief who gets sprung mid heist. Being a tricky fellow, he cleverly stows the loot (an enormous diamond) in the ventilation shaft in a half completed construction site. Cut to two years later: our felon is released from prison and goes to retrieve his jewel – only problem, the nominated construction site is now a police station.

If you like that whole Adam Sandler/Chris Rock style of comedy (than this movie will probably do it for you – Lawrence makes a likable enough star and Dave Chappelle makes for a goofy sidekick), the DVD version is presented in its original widescreen format, so there's none of those annoying stretched and cropped images that you can get when transferring to video. The Dolby digital sound goes down a treat (especially in the many narrative sequences) and DOP David Egby's slick and dice action shots look fab.

It also boasts two behind the scenes featurettes (through the second one from HBO rehashes much of the same commentary). While these reveal little about the filmmaking process, they do contain interview snippets from the stars and director Hip Hop and Rap fans will also be satisfied by the inclusion of music vids from So Plush, Jay Z and Tyrese. • **Cec Busby**



Title The 7th Voyage of Sinbad **Director** Nathan Juran **Cast** Kerwin Mathews, Pinkerton, Charles H Schneer **Distributor** Columbia Pictures **Country of Origin** US **Rating** PG **Duration** 85 minutes **Price** $40

→**The *7th Voyage of Sinbad*** is a classic example of stop motion animation. First screened in 1958, it was the first film of its kind to be made in colour. The jerky movements and the models do not hold a candle to the special effects of the modern era but the cheesiness the outdated special effects gives to such films – especially a film that does not take itself too seriously in the first place – creates a charming effect.

The special features of this DVD product are extensive. There are interviews with producer Schneer and the creator of the visual effects Ray Harryhausen, which prove interesting placing the film in perspective and giving insight into the laborious nature of special effects work in the 1950s and early 1960s. An interview with Harryhausen regarding another of his many films, *Jason and the Argonauts* provides further understanding of the effort required to produce special effects 40 years ago.

There is also a chronicle of the film career of Harryhausen, which details his lifelong passion with special effects and the influence his work has had on the genre. Also included are three trailers of classic animation films and a featurette from the 1950s *THIS IS DYNAMATION* – fantastic film sold. • **Shane Stephens**

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GST Start-Up Assistance Office

The GST Startup Office has provided funding to the AFC to deliver the major information program to the film industry about the GST

Choosing the right digital video camera

Choosing a digital camcorder (that is, one that supports DV or a related format) can be particularly complex. There are so many models with so many different features it is easy to get confused. Here **Wayne Cosshall** focus's on the important features and main issues so you can make an informed choice.

→The glass at the front

A camera's lens determines much about how it can be used. It has four important characteristics: maximum aperture, range of focal lengths, focusing range, and sharpness and contrast.

In traditional cameras, the aperture is the diameter of the pinhole through which light travels on its way from the lens to the film. Likewise in today's digital camcorders, the aperture of the lens determines how much light is let through and the exposure of the recorded images. The wider the maximum aperture, the more light can enter the camera, and (all other factors being equal) the lower the light levels in which you can shoot.

The problem with having a large maximum aperture is this increases the size of the lens, making the camera heavier and larger. The aperture of a lens also determines a feature called depth of field (DoF). When you focus using your camcorder, a single point will be in perfect focus – the DoF determines how far in front and behind the point appears sharp. Smaller apertures (confusingly denoted by larger numbers, like F 11 or F 16) give greater DoF. Large apertures, F 2.8 or F 4, give narrow DoF.

By ensuring that distracting details are out of focus you make them less noticeable, and draw the viewers' attention to the main subjects. A lens with a wide maximum aperture gives you this choice. A lens with a small maximum aperture offers less choice.

The focal length of the lens determines the angle of view the camera sees. Short focal lengths give a wide-angle view. Long focal lengths let you zoom in on details or distant objects. Weigh up if you really require a long zoom range, because having one magnifies not just your subject, but any camera movement too. Thus long range zoom should only be used with a tripod – great for wildlife or sport, but not for the typical corporate video.

Lenses with a great range of focal lengths also tend to be larger and heavier.

Thankfully the lens can usually be supplemented by screw-on wide angle or telephoto adaptors that shorten or lengthen its focal length.

The focusing range of the lens determines how close the lens will focus. Most digital camcorders allow you to focus pretty close to the front of the lens. For people with a special interest in filming the minutiae of this world, such as insects, this is important. Adaptors can allow you to focus closer than the lens would allow by itself.

The design of the lens also affects its quality, usually defined by sharpness and contrast. A better lens will produce nice crisp detail. The contrast of a lens determines how much snap it gives to edges and colours.

Most digital camcorders are limited to the built in lens, possibly supplemented with add-on wide angle, telephoto or close-up lenses. However, some advanced cameras allow you to change the lens. Interchangeable lenses add options, even including microscopes and telescopes, but also add to the bulk of the camera.

→The sensor in the middle

After the light passes through the lens, it is converted into a video signal by the image sensor and associated electronics. The sensor in all digital camcorders is called a CCD or charge coupled device. A CCD is simply a two dimensional array of light sensitive elements. Unlike digital still cameras, the resolution or number of elements in each direction is fixed for digital camcorders by the resolution of its format.

However, there are still two characteristics of the CCD that effect the camera's quality: the size of the CCD elements and how colour is handled.

The size of the CCD elements determines their sensitivity to light. The larger the elements the more light they capture, and the better the CCD tolerates low-light conditions. However, the larger the elements, the larger the CCD and the higher its cost.

The way colour is handled is interesting. CCDs are insensitive to colour by themselves. They need filters placed in front of them to see red, green and blue (through which all other colours can be expressed).
One way to do this is to place red, green or blue filter over each CCD element in a pattern so that one element sees red, its neighbour sees green, and the next one blue. Indeed this is the system used in almost all consumer level and some semi professional digital camcorders. The problem with this approach is that

Canon says its MV200i has an in camera editing function that can work with up to 20 scenes.

Sony says its DCRTRV900 offers an advanced photo mode with PCMCIA floppy disk, Memory Stick and Flash Media support

SOUND CHOICE

If there was a collective bugbear filmmakers have had with MiniDV, it has been in relation to its audio capabilities. Mark Tarpey has had extensive experience as a sound recordist in just about everything from doco to auto stories, including *The Golden Mile* and *For The Defence*.
Considered one of the best in the field, Tarpey describes how he negotiated the audio limitations particular to MiniDV and some DVCam models during a shoot for an Australian Volunteers Abroad production.
The original VX1000 mini microphone jack on the unit was particularly small and fragile, he said. Given the nature of the shoot (covering five countries) Tarpey decided on a transmitter system which. "Worked well as long as there was no interference. Mind you no matter who or what I work with I always have a DAT backup".
Currently working more with DVCpro, asked what is the best model or format for recording sound, without hesitation Tarpey said, "none of them". • **Emma Crimmings**

since we only actually measure red at say every third element, the resolution at which we sample colour is one third of the actual video signal. Since the video signal requires all three colours at each element position, the camera has to guess the colours at the intermediate positions. This guessing is called interpolation – it works well, but it can cause some colour problems.
Professional and some amateur digital camcorders use three separate CCDs, one for each colour. This eliminates all guessing but increases the bulk and price of the camera. It is the preferred technology creating broadcast quality video.

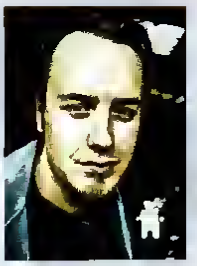
→The tape at the back

The tape is the storage medium for your video. There are a number of digital videotape formats, including MiniDV, Digital8, DVCam and DVCPro.
MiniDV is what most people mean by digital videotape. Aimed at consumer, prosumer and low-end professional use, it is capable of recording excellent video and sound. The tape is tiny, so MiniDV cameras can be exceedingly small.
Digital8 is a new format from Sony that is aimed purely at consumers. It uses the same tapes as Video8 and Hi8 analogue video cameras but records digitally at twice the speed of the analogue formats. It is meant to be a cheap and pretty good. Digital8 cameras can play older analogue Video8/Hi8 tapes – useful if you're an experienced operator.
DVCam is a professional version of MiniDV produced by Sony. DVCPro is also a professional format but from Panasonic. Both will only be encountered on very high end prosumer and professional cameras. They offer advantages, but at a large price jump.
For most purposes, MiniDV is the way to go. It offers near broadcast quality video in a small, sturdy package. You have the maximum choice of cameras and features, as over 80 manufacturers support MiniDV. It also has good support for sound, offering two channels of 48kHz, 16-bit sound (better than CD quality) or four channels of 32kHz, 12-bit sound. Not all cameras support the four channel upgrade, but when available it offers you the possibility of recording ambient (background) sound plus individual channels for, say, an interviewer and a guest. This would let you choose how to mix the sound at the editing stage, rather than while you're recording.

→Other bits

Since holding a camcorder is likely to introduce camera shake, most digital camcorders feature a stabilisation technology, whether optical or digital.
Some form of camera shake removal is necessary on all handheld digital camcorders.

FILMMAKER'S CHOICE



Documentary filmmaker Glendyn Ivin has been involved in a number of productions that he suggests have tested the limits of his gear. "I did a film on bicycle couriers (*Neverland*) and managed to do things with the camera that in retrospect probably weren't such a good idea. Nevertheless we got the footage and the camera still works.
"You can do things with MiniDV that you could only have dreamed about with the older formats," he says.
In addition to his very first digital camera, a Sony MiniDV VX1000, Ivin recently purchased Sony's DVCam DSR-PD100P. When asked why he has two cameras, Ivin says: "I bought the PD100 because I was able to record the material I had just edited back onto digital tape, as the PD100 has analogue and digital inputs whilst the VX1000 only has output. But more importantly, I needed another camera and I didn't want to outlay money for a Digital VCR.
"It is important to know what is out there in terms of formats and new models. However, if you are in the middle of a really great story with rich and colourful characters, then as long as the camera works... that's all you need." • **Emma Crimmings**

Canon says its XL1 comes with an interchangeable 3x zoom lens in addition to its standard 16x zoom lens

Canon says its XM1 has a fluorite lens that provides higher resolution, particularly at long focal lengths

Sony says its DCRVX1000 has many broadcast style features and manual options for flexible shooting

Sony says its DCRTRV820 is the first camcorder to feature a built in video printer

Sony says its DCRPC100 is the first megapixel CCD camcorder

Canon says its MV20i features a progressive scan CCD

ESTABLISHED FILMMAKER

One of the Australia's most respected cinematographers, Jenni Meaney has been responsible for capturing the vision for some of the country's most celebrated documentaries including *Grey Nomads*, *The Mystique of the Pearl*, *Miracle Babies*, *Tenth Dancer* and *Auto Stories*.

"I have watched DV revolutionise documentary. Five to ten years ago documentary was pretty much a closed shop however as a direct result of DV technology a new generation has emerged and with it a reinvigorated media. Mind you this democratisation also has its drawbacks – it's a bit like internet in that there is a lot of crap out there," she says.

Having shot with most of the consumer and professional formats/models on the market, Meaney suggests the rules are the same, "practice, shoot as much as you can and get to know the camera and its limitations. Also watch your rushes with a critical eye and even more importantly talk to editors as they are the ones who make sense of your material in the end". • **Emma Crimmings**

Optical stabilisation involves having sensors monitor the image and move an element within the camera lens to keep the image still. This system works extremely well, especially for high magnification work.

Digital stabilisation involves cropping the image on the CCD into a smaller zone and selectively taking the image from different parts of the CCD as the camera bounces around. This also works, but can result in slightly reduced resolution in those cameras that do not feature a larger than necessary CCD.

Much is made of fold-out LCD screens that allow you to shoot without having the camcorder up to your eye. They are certainly convenient in some situations, such as when shooting at ground level or over your head in crowds. They are also great for reviewing your footage after shooting.

However, they have three disadvantages.

First, they consume a lot of power, so you will drain your battery faster.

Second, they encourage you to hold the camera in a way that makes camera shake more likely. (Camera shake is minimised by pulling the camcorder in tight to the eye when shooting hand-held – not at arm's length as you tend to when using the LCD panel. As an alternative, try lifting the LCD panel up so that you can hold the camcorder to your chest and look down into the LCD. This should provide a more shake-free hold, although it will take you a little practice to get panning down pat.)

Third, they tend to wash out in the bright Australian sun.

Make sure that any camera you buy also has a quality viewfinder, then you can choose whether to use it or any optional LCD screen.

Sooner or later you will want to transfer your video to your FireWire capable Mac so you can edit it. So make sure that the camcorder allows you to download digital video from the camera to a Mac via FireWire (also called IEEE 1394, iLink or DV in/out) for nothing. But also ensure you are able to upload video to the camcorder after you have edited it. This allows you to use the camcorder's circuits to record your DV onto VHS tape by hooking the camcorder's video output to a video recorder. This is important if most people have a VHS video recorder.

If you are going to edit on a Mac you do not need to use any fancy special effects that the camcorder may offer. These are far better done in a video editing program on your Mac. Effects on a camcorder are often complex and have the disadvantage of changing your original footage. The control arrangement of the camcorder you choose should suit your needs.

Some camcorders seem to fit people with large hands and others people with small hands. If the camcorder's controls are hard to reach it will bug you for a long time. Ensure that it is easy to switch to manual focus and that the focus control is convenient. Many people should use manual focus far more often then they do. There's nothing worse than having the autofocus hunt or lock onto the wrong subject in the middle of an important shot. Likewise the exposure controls should be easy to operate. It's desirable to be able to set the aperture manually for depth of field control.

Also, the size of the camcorder should suit your needs. Small, light camcorders are great to carry but are prone to shake and often have a less convenient control layout. Larger professional camcorders are bulky to carry but the weight reduces camera shake and their controls are usually large and fall to hand easily. Manual exposure controls, or at least the ability to deliberately under- or overexpose, can be very important for introducing mood into your shots. It can also be important when panning across a range of brightness, or less critical shooting. Most camcorders offer a backlight compensation control which adds more exposure if you are filming into a bright light. This avoids your subjects becoming silhouettes. Consider carefully the sound capabilities in camcorders. The smaller the camera the more likely it is that its built in microphone will pick up noise from the tape mechanism. If you are interested in good sound ensure the camcorder has connections for external microphones and headphones. Then look into external microphones that suit the type of shooting you do, such as radio microphones for people talking and gun microphones for long distance recording.

Digital camcorders can consume a lot of power. They all come with rechargeable batteries, but there are several battery technologies. Older camcorders may use nickel-cadmium batteries which are pretty poor. Newer camcorders use NiMH or lithium batteries, and these are the way to go. They offer greater capacity and can be recharged at any time even when only partly drained. Depending on your shooting pattern and whether you tend to stray far from power, you may wish to obtain some additional batteries.

Alternatively, some cameras come with a mains power adaptor that allows you to shoot indefinitely while tethered to a power point.

Increasingly digital camcorders are providing the option of capturing still images. While you can grab single frames from any digital camcorder using FireWire, having a still photography feature will help you if you intend to do this often. Camcorders that feature progressive scan CCDs can capture sharper still images and stop movement better. Also, some cameras allow you to connect a camera flash unit for still photography.

Lighting can also be important. Some cameras provide the ability to mount a bright video light on the camera, allowing you to film in dark conditions. This can be great for reportage-type shooting, but produces unsatisfactory results if your aim is more cinematographic. In such cases, separate lighting on stands is better.

→ Camcorder conclusions

Once you understand something of camcorder technology and know the type of shooting you intend to do, shortlisting the camcorders which might be right for you is much easier. Play with them in a store and hire the most likely candidate if necessary before deciding. ■

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SAVE $ $ $ -With 35mm Quality

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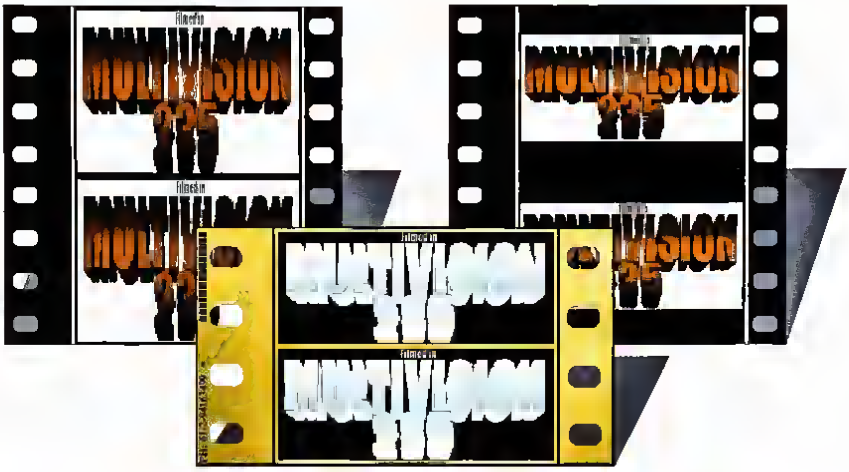

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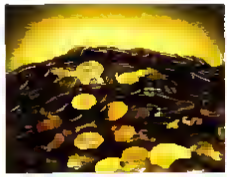

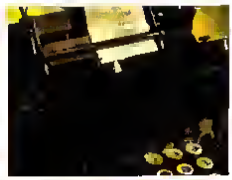

GST for film and television producers

→The GST is now days from implementation All organisations in the television and film industry need to be aware of the issues raised by the GST and should be [illegible] that they are not already planning for its implementation. Some of the basic features of the GST that should be kept in mind are:

- GST is more than a tax on goods and services. It is a tax on taxable supplies and taxable importations.
- The definition of taxable supplies is extremely broad and covers just about every conceivable transaction.
- Some supplies are GST free and some are Input Taxed. In each situation GST is not payable in respect of that taxable supply. GST free supplies allow the supplier to claim input tax credits while Input Taxed supplies do not.
- The supplier is the party responsible for the payment of the GST to the Commonwealth. Unless the supplier can contractually pass on the GST it will be out of pocket to the extent of the GST payable.
- GST paid in respect of creditable acquisitions may be claimed by the person acquiring those goods or services as input tax credits.
- In order to claim input tax credits you must be registered for GST purposes.
- If your organisation's turnover is less than $20 million you will be able to lodge a GST return every three months. However, if your turnover is greater than $20 million you are required to lodge a GST return monthly.
- In order to claim an input tax credit you will need to hold a tax invoice from the supplier of the creditable acquisition which specifies the price paid for the supply and the Australian Business Number of the supplier.

As a producer you need to consider the GST aspects of your daily transactions. For example:

Acquisition of concepts from developers – as the purchaser of rights from the developer you are a recipient and need to determine whether GST has been paid and the extent to which (if any) GST may be recouped as an input tax credit.

Development of concepts with screenwriters – if you engage an independent screenwriter you will be a recipient and need to determine whether GST has been paid and the extent to which (if any) GST may be recouped as an input tax credit. Further if you grant any rights in the concept to allow the screenwriter to develop the screenplay you may be a supplier and need to determine the GST payable and the extent to which the GST can be passed on to the recipient.

Production of films – in producing films you will mainly be a recipient of supplied goods and services and therefore need to determine whether GST has been paid and the extent to which (if any) GST may be recouped as an input tax credit.

Sale or license of communication and distribution rights – by granting the communication and distribution rights in the film you will be a supplier and you will need to determine the GST payable and the extent to which the GST can be passed on to the recipient. This can be particularly difficult when the payment for those rights is made in instalments.

Paying Royalties – royalties are generally paid as consideration for some form of assistance provided by another person in the production of the film. In these circumstances the payment of the royalty will be part of the price of the taxable supply from that person to you. As a recipient you need to determine whether GST has been paid and the extent to which (if any) GST may be recouped as an input tax credit.

Obtaining financial investment – how financial investment is structured will determine whether you are a recipient or the supplier of a taxable supply. You will be a recipient of loans provided to you. However loans are not Input Taxed financial supplies and as such no GST is to be charged to you and no input tax credits may be claimed by you. If investment is in the form of advances obtained for the assignment of rights you are likely to be the supplier and you need to determine the GST payable and the extent to which the GST can be passed on to the recipient.

Conclusion You should think of the GST as a tax on suppliers. It is a broad tax which will capture more events than you might otherwise realise. The impact of GST on you as a producer should be principally a cash flow issue as the majority of GST which you pay in respect of your inputs will be claimed as input tax credits. You should consider each of your day to day transactions in order to determine whether you can claim input tax credits or GST paid by you as a recipient or whether GST needs to be passed on where you are a supplier.

Please note that the above information has been provided as a guide only. The impact GST will have on particular transactions can only be fully assessed by examination of the individual transaction. You should seek professional advice on how the GST will affect transactions you are involved in.

Dan Pearce (Melbourne 03 9321 9999) and Heath Watts (Sydney 02 9234 4444) work in Holding Redlich's Technology Entertainment and Communication Law Group. They advise on parties in the film and television industries, including producers, distributors, broadcasters and creative principals. ◆

InProduction

Feature films
In pre production

TEMPE TIP
Principal company: GIV
Production company: Benker Group
Principal Credits
Director: Michael Ralph
Producer: David Rowe
Line producer: Devo Lightfoot
Executive producers: Richard Brezzo, Phil Davey, Johnathan Shiteman
Screenwriter: Michael Ralph
Director of photography: David Forsman ACS
Editor: Adrian McQueen, Marion Compser: Sue Timms
Sound recordist: Trevor Lember
Synopsis
Everyone dreams of finding a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. But you don't expect to find it in Tempe. For Max Frenkin the search started in his own backyard.

MOLOCH
Production company: GIV
Producers
Distributor: company: Benker Group
Principal Credits
Director: Erin Clark
Producer: David Rowe
Line producer: David Lightfoot
Executive producer: Richard Brezzo, Phil Davey
Screenwriters: Louis Franklin, Rob Gibson
Director of photography: David Forsman ACS
Editor: Adrian McQueen, Mason
Composer: Sean Timms
Sound recordist: Trevor Lember
Production Crew
Data wrangler: n
Art department
Art director: Ray Pattison
Post-production
Post production supervisor: od McQueen, Mason
Synopsis
Four university students on a 4WD holiday in the hope of finding gold instead find the town of Moloch and the secret inhabitants

In production

WILLFULL
Latent Image
Production: 5 May – 4 July
Principal Credits
Director: Rebel Penfold-Russell
Executive producer: Sheridan Jobbins
Screwriter: Harry Cripps
Director of photography: Steve Arnold
Production designer: George Liddon
Editor: Nicholas Beauman
Composer: Antony Partos
Sound recordist: Andrew Bollinty
Planning and development
Casting: Alison Barrott Casting
Extras casting: Michele Ryan
Production Crew
Production manager: Dennis Kelly
Production co-ordinator: Cassandra Simpson
Production's Assistant: Michele Ryan
Location manager: Robin Clifton
Unit manager: Simon Lunn
Assistant unit manager: Brad Roberts
Unit assistant: Mardi Thompson
Pef Lacny
Production assistant: Kerie Gudlin
Production runner: Kane Sarch
Production assistant: Lyn Jones
Accounts assistant: Tracey McKeown
Runner: HW Wood Australia P/L
Legal services: Nine Stevenson & Associates
Camera Crew
Camera operator: Robert Aguilers
Focus puller: Adrian Griffin
Clapper loader: Brett Tenny
Key grip: Greg McInerney
Assistant grip: Andy Rennie
Gaffer: Mike Jones
Best boy: Mark Nowinski, Mark Watson
On set Crew
First assistant director: James Crook
Second assistant director: Tom Reid
Third assistant director: Annabel Osborne
Continuity: Karen Mennfield
Boom operator: Nicole Lezatoff
Make-up/hair supervisor: Trish Glover
Make-up/hair artist: Shelly Hubbard
Special effects: Peredox Fx
Stunt co-ordinator: Reef Stunts
Unit nurse: Patsy Bolton
Still photography: Simon Cardwell
Utilities: Cat in the Travelle CLPR
Art Department
Art director: Richard Hobbs
Art department co-ordinator: Anthea Hodge
Art department runner: Sarah Whalley
Set dresser: Marie McIlroy
Draftsman: Rolf Auld
Prop buyer: Lisa Bitz
Brennor
Standby props: Ben Walker
Wardrobe
Wardrobe supervisor: Julie Middleton
Wardrobe buyer: Suzanne Middleton
Standby wardrobe: Andrea Hood
Wardrobe assistant: Penny Mackie
Animals
Animal handler: Dimity Bjork
Horse wrangler: Wales Liverty Stables
Construction Department
Construction manager: John Ran
Leading hand: Marcus Smith
Carpenters: Chuck Morgan, Rick Locke, Russ Cornes, Kel
John Hendwood, Ian Grant
Robert Arthur
Studios: Max Studios
Post-production
Post production supervisor: Sylvia Walker-Wilson
Assistant editor: Simon Klocko
Shooting stock: Kodak
Cast
Anne Louise Phillips, Anne Looby, C Thomas Howell, Charles Tingwell, John Eaden

STAR WARS EPISODE II- THE RISE OF THE EMPIRE
Principal company: LAK
Production/Unreal Film Ltd
Principal Credits
Director: George Lucas
Producer: Rick McCallum
Cast
Ewan McGregor, Natalie Portman, Samuel L Jackson, Liam Neeson, Ian McDiarmid
Synopsis
Set 10 years after Star Wars Episode One: The Phantom Menace, Darth Sidious takes over the Republic, turns it into an empire and controls everything. The Clone Wars reach their climax as the Jedi Knights struggle to defend the galaxy from the forces of evil. Meanwhile, Anakin Skywalker falls in love with Queen Amidala but begins to succumb to the Dark Side of the Force

CRACKING ON
Certificate Entertainment Pty Ltd
Budget: $12m
Duration: 100 min
Principal Credits
Director: John Meaghan
Producers: John Meaghan, Margie Wentworth
Screenwriter: John Meaghan
Director of photography: Ray Helman
Production designer: Georgo Venter
Editor: Baz Lieffler
Sound recordist: Paul Kalinski, Terry Turk
Planning and Development
Casting: Dez Waterman, Margie Wentworth
Casting: Matthew Nix
Casting consultants: Bodford & Boarne
Extras casting: Clare
Storyboard artist: Jarrod Graham
Shooting schedule by: Kerry Lemming, Anne Robinson, Margie Wentworth
Budgeted by: Margie Wentworth
Production Crew
Production managers: Kerry Lemming, Margie Wentworth
Production secretary: Robert Luppino
Location managers: John Meagher, Rodney Matlizky
Unit assistant: Jessica Tandurella
Production assistant: Jessica Tandurella
Production runner: John Cross, Rohanco Anderson, Rob Williams, Andrew Thompson, David Trumpmann
Assembly editor: Rodney Vincent
Finance controller: Jeff Parts
Production accountant: Margie Wentworth
Insurer: FIUA
Legal services: John McDermott
Camera Crew
Camera operator: Ray Hinman, Cameron Johnston, Pim Kulik, Melissa Gillin, Patrick Gallagher, Nick Pollack, David Smallwood
Camera type: JVC500
Camera maintenance: Digi Hire
Key grip: Pip The Grip
Gaffer: Leroy Page, Joel Clinger
On set Crew
First assistant director: Sy Milton
Second assistant director: Anne Robinson, Angus Stevens
Continuity: Lorna Kerry, Jemma Tandurella, Anita Winbinger
Boom operator: David Trumpmann, Bill Nelson
Head Make-up Artist: Nikki Dingle
Make-up assistants: Jacqui Bullett, Clare Hassen
Stunt co-ordinator: Ian Hall
Stunts: Leroy Page
Catering: Peter Kiley, Annie Robinson, Margie Wentworth
Art director: Jarrod Graham
Art department runner: John Meagher
Set dressers: Jarrod Graham, George Melton
Armourer: Stockade
Wardrobe
Wardrobe: Brett Grant
Construction Department
Construction manager: Chris Lindhren
Footprint unit: Footprint supervisor: Barry Leffler
Editing assistant: Rodney Vincent
Sound editor: Barry Leffler
Recording studio: Digital Edge
Mixer: Greg Dunn
Main mixer: Greg Dunn
Mixed at: Digital Edge
Film/Video gauge: Mini DV to 35mm
Off line facilities: Leffler Point
Cast
John Meagher, Colleen Cook, Peta Johnson, Matthew Manning, Lisa Peers
Synopsis
When a happily married middle aged couple rent a cottage on the mainland they find they agree to date other – so they begin sets out to miss out on finding a girlfriend without lying

DUSK
Production company: Dusk Productions
Budget: $500,000
Production: April 1st to June 10
Post Production: June 16 – Nov
Duration: 90 mins
Principal Credits
Director: Iqbal Borkat
Producer: David Phillips
Line producer: Desmond Hundy
Screenwriter: David Phillips
Director of photography: Vincent Toy
Production designer: Toby Porkel
Editor: Paul Rodriguez
Sound recordist: Olivor Neumann
Planning and Development
Extras casting: Kerry Lamming
Storyboard artist: Bridgette Dolan
Shooting schedule by: Chris Maddox
Budgeted by: Desmond Hundy
Production Crew
Production manager: Leado Hono
Production co-ordinator: Robert Luppino
Location manager: Manjoosh Josh
Unit manager: Jano Bowden
Assistant unit manager: Matt Jenkin
Production runner: Natasha Newton
Assembly editor: Michael Zodio
Legal services: Tress Conks & Madflex
Cast
David Phillipn, George Sen, Rone Frank, Methew Matcolte, Peter Demtek an, Ronan Mc Chenny, Windy Saegenwan
Synopsis
Dunk man Annin yrnn ebout a con n scam end a nofntion

TILL HUMAN VOICES WAKE US
Production company: DND Productions/Kny Entertainment
Investors: AFFC, Key Entertainment, Film Victoria, International sales: Key Entertainment/Tomorrow Film Australia/NZ Distribution: Globe Film Co
Production Crew
Writer/Director: Michael Pattison
Production: Shona Levin, Donna Murphy, Nige Odell, David Redmen
Production Manager: Lucy Manlinron
Director of Photography: Roger Lanser
Production Designer: Ralph Monir
Editor: Bill Murphy
Festival Kat Mikhailova
Art Director: Adolin Fiere
Costume: Dinnigan, Jeenin Cameron
Production Co-ordinator: Anna Melveaux
Sound: John Wilson, Perry Dwyer, Michael Slater, Scott Findlay
Casting Director: Maura Fay & Associates
Marketing
Unit publicist: Andrew Mackie
Cast
Guy Pearce, Helena Bonham Carter
Synopsis
The story of a man (Guy Pearce) who is haunted by the presence of a dead childhood sweetheart (Helena Bonham Carter) when he returns to his rural hometown after a long absence

In post-production

THE MAGIC PUDDING (ANIMATED)
Production company: Energeo Entertainment
ICON Entertainment
Budget: US$7 Million
Post Production: June – August
Duration: 80 mins
Principal Credits
Director: Karl Zwicky
Animation director: Robbert Smit
Producer: Ed Trost
Executive producer: Gerry Travers
Screenplay: Greg Haddrick, Harry Cripps, Simon Hopkins
Based on the story titled: The Magic Pudding by Norman Lindsay
Editor: Richard Hindley
Composer: Chris Harriott

Sound designer Phil Judd
Sound recordist Phil Judd
Production Crew
Production manager Kylie Andrews
Financial controller David Berry
Production accountant William Creemer
Accounts assistant Jeanette Caylet
Payroll officer Cindy Ng
Legal services Morris Avnit
Post-production
Editing assistant Danielle Akeyan
Marketing director Chris Hornett
Animation Enrique Sarre
Film/Video grade 35mm
Marketing Sarah Winkler
Interactive assistant ICON Entertainment International
International distributor ICON Entertainment International
Publicity Sarah Winkler
Cast John Cleese, Geoffrey Rush
Sam Neill, Hugo Weaving, Jack Thompson, Toni Collette, Meryl Streep
Mary Coustas
Synopsis
Based on Norman Lindsay's classic children's story the Adventures of Albert the Cantankerous Magic Pudding. An adventure story about friendship and friendship
LA SPAGNOLA
Production company Wild Strawberry Pty Ltd
Post-Production Until November 2000
Principal Credits
Director Steven Jeroba
Producer Anna Maria Montiel
Co-producer Philippa Harshaw
Scriptwriter Anna Maria Montiel
Cast
Lola Marcat, Lourdes Bertolome, Alex Dimitrades, Alex Ansara, Simon Palmer, Helen Thompson
Synopsis
A comedy story of a Spanish matriarch/daughter relationship that love revenge, prejudice and survival in a small Australian town during 1960
THE ENCHANTED BILLABONG
Production company TEB P/L
Imaginative Productions and R Productions P/L
Distribution company Columbia Tristar
Budget 10.3m
Animated CGI feature film and 3D IMAX film
Principal Credits
Director David Waddington
Producers Rob McKenzie, David Waddington
Executive Producer Jack Wagman
Scriptwriter Michael Wagner
Production designer Wayne Bryant
Editor David Waddington
Composer Craig Bryant
Sound designer Julian Hill
Planning and Development
Casting Redford & Pearce
Video Maker Ivy FMTV
Cast
Chloe Lattanzi, Daniel Depardo, Tammy Dyer, Jason Birkshire, Sally Cristinelli, Jenny Sessman, Matthew King, Rhona Reno
Synopsis
A boy learns to believe in his enriched world and the characters that live there and in doing so he learns about himself
THE MERCHANT OF FAIRNESS
Distributor Pictures Pty Ltd
Post-Production Until August 95 mins
Principal Credits
Director Shane Luther
Producer Shane Luther
Line producer Adam Drillian
Scriptwriter Shane Luther
Director of photography Tim Spriet
Production designer Martine Symonds
Editor Cindy Clerkson
Composer Jamil Rogson
Sound designer Keith Thomas
Sound production Tim Symonds
Joan Kelly
Script editor Annette Blinkski
Casting Halin Martin
Legals Emily Slade Harding Redfort
Shooting Stock Kodak
Laboratory Cinevex
Camera Equipment Panavision
Sound Equipment Pink Noise
Development Investment Australian Film Commission
Cast
Shane Luther, Jason Spare, Zwangliam Darlette, Annie Strekosch, Beth Ezekel, Dorr McCoy, Brad Keate, Marcus Kristina Cameron, Nugent Alden, Andrew Crimy, Luke Norman, Tammy Patrick, Sam Marsland, Timmy, Meryl Downey
Synopsis
Everyone wants someone else's life. Julian fantasments his own back. A childhood friend is obsessed with him, a gang of losers have embraced him as their leader and a teenage temptress wants to take "maybe" for an answer
MOULIN ROUGE
Production company Bazmark Productions
Distribution company Twentieth Century Fox
Principal Credits
Director Baz Luhrmann
Producers Baz Luhrmann, Martin Brown, Fred Baron
Scriptwriters Baz Luhrmann, Craig Pearce
DOP Donald McAlpine
Cast
Nicole Kidman, Ewan McGregor, Richard Roxburgh, John Leguizamo, Garry McDonald
Synopsis
A young man leaves the shackles of his middle class society for a romantic adventure in the arms of the treacherous courtesan and underworld of Paris
NIJINKSKI
Film Institute Films and Music Arts Dance Films
Distribution company Shaftesbury Films and WTV (US)
Budget 1.2 Million
Production January 2000 May
Principal Credits
Director Paul Cox
Producer Paul Cox, Aanya Whitehead
Executive producer Kevin Lural, William Marshall
Scriptwriter Paul Cox
Director of photography Vasiliy Nijinsky
Composer Paul Grabowsky
Planning and Development
Casting Directors Leonie Verhoeven, Margo Weward
Unit Coordinator Alide Chase
Shooting schedule by Anya Whitehead
Production Crew
Trailer Cinesuite
Completion guarantor Film Finance Ltd
Legal services Matsoffs and Dent
Onset Crew
Choreographer Alida Chase
Leigh Warren
Unit publicist Catherine Lavelle
Wardrobe
Wardrobe Designer Jilly Hickey
Government Agency investment Development South Australian Film Corporation
Production South Australian Film Corporation
Distributor Arsenal
Film Finance Corporation $95 Independent
Synopsis
Vaslav Nijinsky was the baby the greatest dancer of all time, the God of the Dance, and a Russian Jew. Diaghilev's genius, the most extraordinary and very real literary works ever written. The Diaries. The words of Nijinsky written in 1919 in St Moritz where he had retired after a nervous breakdown
SPUDMONKEY
Production company Spudmonkey Films Pty Ltd
Post Production April October
Principal Credits
Director Stuart McBratney
Producers Jon Silver, Michael Bouskila, Stuart McBratney
Scriptwriter Stuart McBratney
Based on the original screenplay Filled Spudmonkey By Stuart McBratney
Director of photography Andrew Strahorn
Production designer Georgina Greenhill
Editors Rachel Gibson, Cheryl Potter
Composers Stuart McBratney, Troy Manyweather
Sound recordist Chris Cuthbine
Sound assistant Leigh Coleman
Planning and Development
Script editor Tom Bates
Casting Stuart McBratney
Casting consultant Steve Kimmins
Extras casting Tim Wood
Denella Rigby
Storyboard artist Stuart McBratney
Shooting schedule by Christy Beard
Budgeted by Jon Silver, Vicki Best
Production Crew
Production manager Vicki Best
Production coordinators Dunella Rigby, Justine Hatcher
Producer's assistant Carl Baker
Location manager Carl Baker
Unit manager Justine Hatcher
Unit assistant David McLachlan
Production assistants Liberty Metzer, Kit Scott
Production runner Knatie Ifinger
Trainee Hollie Insumrra
FILM CSE
Lead supervisor Melrolm McBrinny
Camera Crew
Focus puller Travis Trewin Aroe Jeong
Clapper loader Evan Burrows
Camera type Arri from Lemro Aqyong, Adam McPhail
Assistant grip Liam Connor
Mark Fisher, Dale Oldman
Griffer Grant Jones
Sparky Jamie Thompson
Electrician Luke Dillon
Onset Crew
Trainee trainee director Christy Beard
Second assistant director Lorentz Rigby
Third assistant director Marcus Single
Continuity Cheryl Potter, Rachel Pierson
Boom operators Luke Hayward, Clint Brice, Moran McCormack
Make-up Tiffany Beckwith, Skillnet
Make-up assistant Emma Louise Downie, Cherie Sruthereen
Hairdresser Tiffany Beckwith, Skillnet
Scripts clerk Christy Beard
Unit nurse Vicki Best
Stills photography Carlos Van Jorgen, Marcus Smith
Unit analyst Tom Betts
Catering Justine Hatcher, David McLachlan, Eagle Boys
Art Department
Art director Suzie Blackshaw
Assistant director Tim Allan
Set dressers Peter Wright, Michelle Manson, Chris Bira
Propsperson David Mackie
Standby props Mick Valde
Wardrobe
Wardrobe supervisor Laura Evans
Wardrobe assistants Joanne Wright, Danielle Morton
Post production
Film/Video grade super 16mm
Shooting stock Kodak
Video faulters by Beaps Pty Ltd
Video special fx Beaps Pty Ltd
Video master by Beaps Pty Ltd
Cast
Greg Fowell, Michelle Tomkins, Samantha Fitzgerald, Damian Garvey, Kathryn Lister, Vernon Johnson, Lil Perry, Erroll O'Neill, Paul Pulnatt, Wahb Louise Boothby
Synopsis
Contemporary comedy about a pizza delivery boy who achieves his dream of drumming in a successful rock band only to be replaced by computerised drums
THE BANK
Arania Pty Ltd
Production period From July 24
Principal Credits
Director Robert Connolly
Producer John Maynard
Scriptwriter Robert Connolly
Director of Photography Tristan Milani
Production Designer Craig Pilot no
Editor Nick Meyers
Sound Designer Sam Petty
Casting Mill mans
Storyboard Artist Tam Morris
Cast David Wenham

Telefeatures
In pre-production

IHAKA
Production company Screenime/Scott Pacific Pictures
Distributor company Celebrity International
Pre-production from 8 May
Principal Credits
Director Peter Fisk
Producer Ian Bradley
Line producer Glenda McKenzie
Executive producer Dean Monaghan
Scriptwriter Paul Thomas
Production designer Murray Pickett
Director of photography Nino Martinetti
Planning and Development
Casting Maizels Casting
Casting consultant Suzie Maizels
Synopsis
A stereotypical Maori rock and sophisticated Sydney cop team up to solve three year old murder mystery

MY HUSBAND MY KILLER
Production company Screenime/Columbia Tristar
Executive producer Jane Prior
Production 17 July
Post Production 14 Aug
Duration 90 min
Principal Credits
Director Peter Andrikidis
Producer Devu Gould
Supervising producer Tony Blakley
Executive producers Dan Monaghan, Fran McConnell
Scriptwriter Craig Haddock
Based on the book titled My Husband My Killer by Sandra Harvey and Lindsay Simpson
Director of photography Joe Pickering
Production designer Michael Philpe
Planning and Development
Casting Susie Mazels
Production Crew
Production line age Sam Thomson
Location manager Anucites Noble
Onset Crew
Trainee trainee director Russell Williams
Marketing
Publicity Tracey Marr

In post-production

ARIA & PASTA
Production company Passionfruit Productions
Budget $1,300,000
Post-Production 15 May 30 August
Principal Credits
Director Bruce Beresford
Laws Fitz Gerald
Line producer John Izzard

Executive producers: Philip Gerlach, Bruce Berenford
Associate producer: Augustus Dulgarr
Director of photography: Tom Gleason
Editor: Damsa Hunter
Sound recordist: Luc Sullivan
Planning and Development
Raraamhar: Karin Wild
Production Crew
Production supervisor: Philip Gerlach
Production manager: John Izzard
Producer's assistant: Renea Redford
Production secretary: Peter Thomson
Production accountant: Sieraira Maldoum
Moneypenny
Insurance: Crescura
Completion guarantor: Film Finances
Legal services: Tim Benjamin
Travel coordinator: Travalorp
Barcoffee liaison: Augustus Dulgarr
Marketing
Publicity: Augustus Dulgaro
Pata Thomson at Total Film & Television
Surgeon: Barbara Pappna Sir Thomas Allan, Derek Lea
Regin: Dmitri Hvorostovsky
Renata Scotto: Marilyn Horne
Cecilia Bartoli: Bryn Terfel
Synopsis
Anna and Pata take a night part lifestyle series which takes a look at the ups and downs of eight of the world's most popular operatic stars. Each episode combines footage from the preparation of the stars favourite pasta dish

THE LOVE OF LIONEL'S LIFE

Liberty & Beyond Production Pty Ltd
Distribution company: Beyond International
Post Production: 3 April - 26 June 26
Principal Credits
Director: Jean Kuane
Producers: Tony Devenrugh, Simone Nutt
Co-producer: Des Power
Executive producer: Mikael Borglund
Associate producer: Pete Lawson
Production designer: Adam Head
Sound recordist: Bob Clayton
Planning and Development
Casting: Suzia Marzels and Associates
Casting assistant: Michael Boland
Producer: Crew
Production manager: Lor Fleksel
Production coordinator: Jo Friesen
Producer's assistant: Naomi Wenck
Production secretary: Kate Kennedy
Location managers: Chris Butler, Harry Yates
Unit manager: Matthew Jones
Unit assistants: Gavin Evans, Simon Buckley
Production runner: James Muller
Production accountant: Nedaen Kingskott
Insurance: Willis Australia Ltd
Completion guarantor: Film Finance Corporation
Camera Crew
First puller: Jo Erikkino
Clapper loader: Melinda Rinkmann
Grip: Grant Nielsen
Dolly grip: John Axel Dolan
Best assistant: Andrew Sandilord
Gaffer: William Rutherford
Best boy: Andrew Saul
Generator operator: Matt Fergus
Director Crew
First assistant director: Bob Howard
Second assistant director: Vera Blume
Third assistant director: Roberta Kelly
Assistant script editor: Karen Walorth
Continuity: Joanne McLennan
Boom swinger: Phil Stirling
Hair/Make up supervisor: Lynne O'Brian
Make-up artist: Michelle Ritch
Stunt coordinator: Chris Arda son
Salary officer: Lana Darby
Still photography: Craig Noeker
Unit publicist: Deb Withers
Art Department
Art director: Brent Taylor
Art department coordinator: Jennifer Chempir
Art department runner: Rod Brannan
Scenic artist: Adam Smigelski
Standby props: Stuart Polkinghorne
Armourer: Bob Parsons
Wardrobe
Costume designer: Melody Crupar
Standby wardrobe: Cerina Gedenore
Wardrobe assistant: Jay Mensfield Askew
Post-production
Editor: Andrew Marnel
Assistant editor: Brad Lindenmayer
Director's attachment: Peter Wright
Cast
Matt Dey: Alex Dimitriades
Nadine Garner: Steva Vidler
Graeme Blundell: Cinrot Burns
Chris Betts: Heather Mitchell
Catherina Mittar: Paul Denny
Jocelyn Rei
Synopsis
Lorna Burke's content with life in remote Queensland town. He's got his mates, his pub at the moment his dependable dog Fuggly and his dream of one open the town's theatre. And romance? Not likely in this town. But an unusual correspondence with Lene leads to an impromptu meeting. And a friendship that turns a small town upside down

Documentaries
In production

ANIMAL X - SERIES 2

Series Documentary
Production company: Storyteller Productions
Production from 1 May
Duration: 13 x 30 minutes
Principal Credits
Executive producers: Mike Searle, Jennifer Wilson
Producers: Mike Searle, Nigel Swetenham, Jennifer Wilson
Melanie Ambrose, Linda Sorrell, Carolyne Beirnam
Synopsis
As with series one, ANIMAL X SERIES 2 investigates animal stories from around the world. From ghostly phenomena to fakir ... sightings to unknown creatures

AUSTRALIANS AT WAR

Series documentary
Production company: Bayord Productions Pty Ltd
Information with Multicrack
Production from 1 April
Duration: 8 x 55 minutes
Principal Credits
Supervising Producer: Stephen Amezdroz
Producer: Michael Caulfield
Director: Cliff Burton, David Grilde, Steve Bastian Clark
Writers: Geoff Burton, David Grilde, Steve Bertram Clark
Synopsis
Australians at War examines the affects of war on the lives of Australians and how the nation has been shaped by those experiences

BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE 10 THE FORGOTTEN SPECIES

Short Documentary
Storyteller Productions
Production from 1 April
Duration: 54 minutes
Principal Credits
Executive Producer: Mike Searle
Producers: Mike Searle, Gill Clough, Sam McDonaugh, Linda Scerri
Director: Mike Searle
Writer: Mike Searle
Synopsis
Episode ten in the BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE series looks at the longtailed species, India's elephants, crocodiles and rhinos – all critically endangered and never shadowed by their African counterparts

Recent funding decisions
Features

ROGUE

Production company: Rogue Film Productions Pty Ltd
Principal Credits
Executive Producers: Gary Hamilton, Mikael Borglund, Michael Gudinski
Producers: Martin Fabinyi, Julie Ocerton
Writer/Director: Greg Mclean
Synopsis
An idyllic wildlife tourism far Northern Australia turns into terror when a massive crocodile stalks a party of tourists. Panic mounts when Kate, the leader of the tour realises by the size and ferocity of the animal that they are in fact being hunted by a rogue crocodile, an extremely territorial animal that savagely kills its victims then takes them to its lair to be devoured later

LANTANA

Production company: Jane Chapman Films
Principal Credits
Producer: Jane Chapman
Director: Ray Lawrence
Writer: Andrew Bovell
Synopsis
Combining the genre of a bourgeois thriller, mystery and romantic dramedy, it takes a series of a number of characters in a rural timeline that overlap. They are connected by a series of random encounters involving a perpetrator, infidelity and false assumption. The search for meaning by Leon, the main character and driver, the narrative

SUBTERANO

Production company: Becker Filmar Pty Ltd
Principal Credits
Producers: Richard Becker, Barb Taylor
Director/Writer: Esbar Storm
Distributor: REP, MBM, Becker Filmar
Synopsis
Subterano is a virtual holographic game, in which Ektomen, a sadistic killer, hunts his victims through a subterranean maze. Thirteen souls, trapped in a carpark, are being preyed upon by a bizarre and deadly array of pilotless control toys. When the toys attack and the killing starts, they realise someone is playing the game for real.

Feature Length Documentary

AUSTRALIA - LAND BEYOND TIME

Production company: Living Pictures (Australia) Pty Ltd
Principal Credits
Producers: David Flatman, Sue Flatman
Director: David Flatman
Synopsis
Australia - Land Beyond Time traces the tourbillion year journey of this ancient southern land, the world's oldest continental landmass. It reveals the ingenious strategies life has evolved to survive the Earth's most challenging extremes in this grand Antipodean epic, selected from eight hundred hours, from more than 30 million years.

Television Drama

THE RUBICON

(2x1 hour television miniseries)
Production company: Southern Star John Edwards
Principal Credits
Producers: John Edwards, Layne Warner
Director: Rowan Woods
Writers: Christopher Lee, John Collee
Presales: Seven Network, BskyB
Synopsis
While on a backpacking holiday in Australia, 21 year old Gamma meets and falls in love with Michael Tyler, a big type posing as an undercover cop. Years later, after he is arrested, it is discovered that he is a 40 year old man hiding from a vicious underworld mob. Using the blood of a compatible donor, Gemma travels to Australia to find Tyler, the father of her son. Her blood is not a perfect match, but he is approached from prison and urgently asks for Gemma. The police are here to track him down. Thinking that Gemma has betrayed him, Tyler takes her hostage. But as trust grows, they discover a friendship and a bond. Gemma realises that maybe a way to save both her son and the man she loves.

Documentaries

MALPAS

Production company: CAAMA Productions Pty Ltd
Duration: 52 minutes
Principal Credits
Producer: Priscilla Collins
Director: Erica Glynn
Writer: Kate Gilbert
Presale: SBS
Synopsis
MALPAS tells of the relationship between Indigenous women living in remote Indigenous communities in the deserts of Australia. It will illuminate the unique work of the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) by putting the spotlight on the longstanding relationship between the Malpas (partners)

MR STREHLOW'S FILMS

Production company: Journeycam Productions
Duration: 52 minutes
Principal Credits
Producer: Adrian Herring
Director/Writer: Hart Cohen
Presale: SBS
Synopsis
Mr Strehlow's Films, a documentary about the life and work of TGH Strehlow, tells the story of an Arrernte man and the legacy of the extraordinary Strehlow Collection. Special attention is given to the origins of the collection, controversies surrounding ownership and current strategies of repatriation and the use of film work by Aboriginal people.

POLES APART

Production company: Rymer Beyly Wilson Productions
Duration: 52 minutes
Principal Credits
Producers: Judy Rymer, Robert Jean
Director: Judy Rymer
Presales: SBS
Synopsis
A story about politics, money and cultural leaps of faith seen through the controversial history surrounding a single work of art, Jackson Pollock's Blue Poles and involving two nations, Australia and the US

The sum of us

The gurus rate recent releases

	Sandra Hall	Vicky Roach	Julie Rigg	Tom Ryan	Mark Naglazas	Lawrie Zion	Adrian Martin	Megan Spencer	Andiee Paviour	Madeleine Swain	David Stratton	The Average
ME MYSELF I	7	5	5	4	5	8	2	5	5	7	7	5
LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI	8	7	6	8	4	9	8	5	6	9	9	7
SAMPLE PEOPLE	•	3	•	•	•	0	4	3	1	7	7	3
MANSFIELD PARK	7	4	6	6	3	7	7	7	8	7	7	6
GLADIATOR	•	8	8	7	4	9	4	8	7	9	9	7
THE STRAIGHT STORY	9	9	7	8	8	7	9	7	•	9	9	8
GHOST DOG	•	•	•	7	•	•	9	7	•	8	8	8
WONDERLAND	•	9	•	10	•	9	9	7	7	8	8	8
GALAXY QUEST	7	•	6	5	6	•	6	8	6	7	7	6
ERIN BROCKOVICH	•	7	6	6	7	8	8	6	6	7	7	7
TOPSY-TURVY	7	9	9	8	7	•	9	7	5	6	6	7
FOR LOVE OF THE GAME	5	•	•	2	5	7	3	4	4	1	1	4
BRINGING OUT THE DEAD	•	•	•	7	8	8	4	5	6	8	8	7

Topsy-Turvy

The Straight Story

Wonderland

OUR REVIEW GURUS HAVE RATED A SELECTION OF THE LATEST RELEASES ON A SCALE OF 0 TO 10, THE LATTER BEING THE OPTIMUM RATING. A DOT MEANS NOT SEEN

Erratum issue 132

Apologies to director Khyentse Norbu who was described as a Buddhist monk when he is actually a lama, p 18

Bruce Beresford was incorrectly credited with having directed Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock*, p 39